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To my mother, Alicja Igiel

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on national symbols and the communicative role they play in social change as it manifests itself in social movements and revolutions. Symbols in social movements and revolutions play a crucial role in binding people and groups together, allowing them to focus and form a collective consciousness. In order to contextualize such symbols within a specific national community and provide examples, the author chose her native Poland as a case study. The Polish national symbols included in this study are the cross, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, and the contested landscape of the National Stadium in Warsaw. The framework used in this study to analyze the selected national symbols is Kramer's theory of dimensional accrual of disassociation and the method is a semiotic analysis. Based on the discussion of national symbols in Poland, the study offers guidelines for how to recognize what national symbols are and to understand how they can affect social change.

Introduction

Symbols are ubiquitous in human communication since they are communication. Whether it is the utterance of words and usage of language, nonverbal communication, or the presence of artifacts, we witness the conveying of meaning through symbolic expressions all the time. Symbols fall into different categories and are studied by different disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, linguistics, literature, and media studies, to name a few, which have all informed and defined some of the more notable theories of symbols and the study thereof.

Symbols in social movements and revolutions play a crucial role in binding people and groups together, allowing them to focus and form a collective consciousness. Symbols bind people at an emotional level by evoking passion; they go to the roots of identity. Another attribute of symbols is their potential resilience, especially when they emerge from the underground, progressing to victorious and potentially monumental symbols over time. Some monumental symbols are associated with nations, thus becoming national symbols; some are remnants of ancient civilizations that have not necessarily morphed into nations. The use of symbolism has played a part in mobilizing forces of social movements on an international scale, but this study will mainly focus on symbols that have a national character, providing examples of the communicative nature of national symbols. Although there is some literature that mentions national symbols, primarily nationalism literature, only a few studies have investigated the nature and influence of national symbols (Geisler, 2005; McCrone & McPherson, 2009; Mock, Elgenius, 2011; Mock, 2012). There are a variety of studies that revolve around different kinds of symbols and symbolism, but

“national symbolism is set apart from other types of symbolism by its reference to the nation, its claims to a specific history, sovereignty and distinctiveness” (Elgenius, 2011, p. 9). Also, the studies referenced above had different goals than the one proposed here. Two of the four studies referenced above discuss the role national symbols have in the construction of national identity (Geisler, 2005; Mock, 2012), one discusses national symbols as constructing and mobilizing national identity (McCrone & McPherson, 2009), and another one focuses on nation building qualities of national symbols (Elgenius, 2011). Studies of national symbols usually focus on national flags, national days, and national anthems. This study focuses on symbols that are not directly tied to the nation as a state, but more to the nation as an ethno-cultural community. In order to contextualize such symbols within a specific national community and provide examples of their communicative role, the author chose her native Poland as a case study. The reason for choosing ethno-cultural aspects of nationhood in this case study is justified by Poland’s continuous existence as a nation even when its geopolitical existence as nation-state was disrupted several times.

Selecting Poland as a Case Study

The rationale for choosing Poland as a case study is its culture of resistance throughout history, a mechanism that seems to have been holding this European country together in a long string of events that aimed for the opposite. Poland has been subjected to three partitions, with the longest one taking it off the political map for 123 years, as well as attacks and occupation during the two World Wars which culminated in an oppressive rule by the communist regime. That is not to say that Poland has always been in the victim’s role, characterized as a “crucified nation” (Davies, 2008, p.

11), an image that is also used at times by some Poles who do not accept Poland's role in the massacres in Jedwabne during World War II, for instance (Polonsky & Michlic, 2004). However, Poland lends itself as a case study to this particular research on national symbols and social change since it is a country and a culture that despite its differences at times, seems to have a curious sense of patriotic solidarity that allowed it to fight its oppressors and recover from its wounds. That sense of patriotism, national consciousness, pride, and solidarity is at the core of Poland's culture and identity. Poland's triple disappearance and return to the political map is speaking to its cultural resistance and memory as a nation without a state throughout history, as does the peaceful Solidarity movement to the nature of revolutions. Zubrzycki (2006) notes the lack of studies of Polish nationalism in sociology, which is of importance here as the author of this study focuses on social processes and consequences as well.

Polish nationalism, despite its richness and complexity, has received relatively little attention in the field [of sociology]. Few studies are devoted to the Polish case, and even fewer focus on the post-Communist period, despite the massive geopolitical import of this transition...the great majority of works on Polish nationalism focus on political philosophy and Polish nationalism's ideological roots...To date, there exists no book-length study of nationalism and religion in Poland, or of nationalism in post-Communist Poland. (pp. 28-29)

Furthermore, what makes Poland interesting as a case study for nationalism has been aptly observed by Ash (2002), when referring to the "Partitions" in 1772, 1793 and 1795: "Poland disappeared from the map of Europe as an independent state for the next one hundred and twenty-three years. But it refused to disappear as a nation" (p. 4). Poland's continuous fight for independence throughout history is quite remarkable, leading to "one of the basic components of Polish culture and helped to create a national mythology that glorified struggle, self-sacrifice, and death in the cause of the

homeland” (Paczkowski, 2003, p. 1). The national sentiment that did not erupt in violence during the last social movement was significant in leading up to the demise of communism. Poland has been often times described as an anomaly among the former Soviet satellite states.

The Polish situation had its own peculiar features. In the 1970s the Polish opposition shared with other Eastern European oppositional movements a common disability—it could not express itself through open political channels (political parties, clubs, or trade unions). Yet the intensity of social activism in Poland, including underground political debates, clandestine publications, and independent ceremonies and demonstrations far surpassed anything created in other Eastern European countries. Having been unable to practice politics, Polish oppositionists often chose to express themselves through the “cultural” medium of symbolic public actions. (Kubik, 1994, p. 6)

In addition to the historical and socio-political factors that demonstrate the unique nature of this case study, the author of this study is a native of Poland who speaks the language, thus having access to materials that have not been translated from Polish. The author has also been living in Poland during the latter part of Solidarity’s activism (1980-1989) as well as visited her native country following the events of 1989. Based on this case study, the author discusses directions and implications for the study of national symbols and social change that can be applied to other contexts.

To understand the significance of national symbols in any given nation, the identity of that nation has to be examined. The identity of a collective, such as that of a nation, is shaped by symbols, sometimes referred to as cultural artifacts, which fundamentally contribute to the narratives of a nation’s memory. The word monument has its origin in the Latin form of *monere*, which means “to remind” or “to warn.” Hence the resilience of monumental symbols, amongst others, the meaning of which is stored in the memory of a collective. This idea of a symbol system, and the meaning of

those symbols being stored in memory have been interpreted in various ways. The interpretive lens used in this study to discern some of the logic behind the patterns of national symbolism and to unveil the structures that contribute to the occurrence and meaning thereof is the field of semiotics, which is discussed in more detail in the next section as well as in the methodology section.

Semiotics: An Overview

This study is a semiotic analysis conjoined with a hermeneutics of national symbols in Poland. This section serves as an overview of why semiotics is a fitting methodology for the present study, and to introduce several semiotic concepts that are pertinent to this study. Although semiotics has been described as mostly theoretical, semioticians have tried to establish and designate codes and conventions that would classify and organize signs in a more systematic manner. Semiotic principles become quite practical when applied to social realities where an interpretation based on empirical evidence can contribute to a better understanding of those social realities. Such contributions, particularly when the questions raised by the researcher pertain to societal issues and the answers can be contested and applied to other contexts, have merit and add to the validity of the methodological approach.

We learn from semiotics that we live in a world of signs and we have no way of understanding anything except through signs and the codes into which they are organized. Through the study of semiotics, we become aware that these signs and codes are normally transparent and disguise our task in 'reading' them....In defining realities signs serve ideological functions. Deconstructing and contesting realities of signs can reveal *whose* realities are privileged and whose are suppressed. (Chandler, 2002, pp. 14-15, italics in original)

In this study of national symbols in Polish society some of the historically privileged realities are discussed as they emerged through nationalist discourse. The social

construction of these realities was achieved through symbolic manipulation of public events that were organized by the representatives of the communist regime.

Semiotics is most commonly described as the study of signs and “although the interest in signs and the way they communicate has a long history...modern semiotic analysis can be said to have begun with two men—Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)” (Berger, 1998, pp. 3-4). The term *semiology* mostly refers to the linguistic tradition since Saussure and *semiotics* has been used to refer to the philosophical tradition of the theory of signs since Peirce, which later on became the dominant term for the study of signs and has been adopted in 1969 as the general term that comprises the “whole field of research in the traditions of both semiology and general semiotics” (Nöth, 1995, p. 14).

Semiology, in the Saussurean tradition, is a study of existing conventional, communicative systems. Following the linguistic tradition, these systems have been expanded to include languages that go beyond the spoken and written word. For example, stop lights and semaphores are semiotic systems and they are all modes of communication, which allow us to function through their intelligibility as we negotiate the world. Semiotics studies everything that is understood as a language made up of a system of signs. According to Saussure (1966), language does not belong to the speaker as it is not a “private” semiotic system. He argues that language is conventional and belongs in the public sphere; it belongs to all of us. Since it is public and does not belong to a private person who can make things up, and because it is conventional, it is communicative. It is something we can use and share. Following Saussure’s argument,

we do not speak language; language is something virtual that we can use. Thus, we infer from speech, speech is what we do, it is how we use language.

According to Saussure (1966), the relationship between the signified (concept) and the signifier (sound-image; word) is necessary, but arbitrary. He posited that the signified and the signifier formed an indivisible sign. As such, we put the signs together by taking those binary relationships (between concepts and sound images) and compose them in a sequence, which is how we speak. The idea that we take a signifier and link it to the implied, the idea that a word signifies a concept or idea and not an object is not new, it was fully developed in John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*. Saussure took that conventional thought, adapted it, and made use of it. Saussure's more original contribution consists of two things he said about the sign: first, the signified-signifier relationship is arbitrary; second, the way we know one sign from another is either studying language in the aggregate (cluster of signs exist in associational relation to each other), or studying it in speech acts whereby signs exist next to each other in a sequence. The way we understand what a sign is, is differential, hence Saussure's contribution: the sign, which is tied up in this relationship between signified and signifier, is both arbitrary and differential. Saussure (1966) refers to the latter as "two correlative qualities" (p. 118).

Saussure, like the Russian formalists, tried to establish semiology as a science of signs to bring some order into the study of linguistics. He wanted language to be understood differentially, in the variety of ways in which language organizes signs. We need signs to be differential so that we can distinguish between all the signs we use in any communicative sequence. In other words, signs are differential when they are not

linked to natural things or other signs by natural means. We can only know a unit of language, which we use to communicate with others negatively; we know it only because it is not everything else. We know things and recognize them for what they are, but we can only know what they are because of the context in which they are not those other things, those other signs. The example of a red light has been referenced by Saussure, Eco, and others, as it is a convention within a system of differences. That is how we know how to read the sign. Lévi-Strauss (1955) coined the term gross constituent unit, which influences the meaning of the sign in a semiotic system. This makes the sign arbitrary in general, but not so in a specific context because “the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations* and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning” (p. 431, italics in original). Another example of these arbitrary but contextual relations is a Christmas tree, which, as a sign, can only be understood in a cultural context. It is part of a semiotic system where the tree can be known negatively/differentially as a not-menorah, a not-kinara, and so forth.

A lot of times we assume meaning to be common knowledge because we are familiar with a sign, but when someone enters the conversation and does not share the knowledge, we have to ask ourselves what the meaning of the sign is and how do we know what it means to us. What makes a national symbol a national symbol, and how do I know that? It is part of a cultural system, a semiosis. Although we might not doubt that we know signs as something, the question that needs to be addressed is how do we know them. When we need to know something in particular, to distinguish it from other signs, we need to know it negatively. Otherwise, if we do not know a sign

negatively, we do not know what differentiates that sign from other signs, it becomes difficult to know the sign's meaning and that changes communication. It can distort communication, cause a delay in communication, or stop it altogether because we do not know the sign and thus cannot proceed.

Semiotics, even with its limitations, offers us a way to understand how we know what we know. Also, we only know the signs we know if we know the semiotic system they belong to. So, if I do not know the system of signs that a national symbol as a sign belongs to, the symbol does not have meaning to me. The intelligibility of the sign system is achieved through its conventionality. We cannot mess with conventional systems by imposing our individual will/agency and expecting it to change. In the case of an attempt to modify or create a sign through individual agency, the respective community needs to consent to the modification or creation of a sign in order for the sign to have any meaning.

A significant difference between Saussure's and Peirce's approach to conceptualizing sign models is the dyadic-triadic dichotomy. Saussure proposed a dyadic model of the sign where the sign (*signe*) correlated to the dyad of the signifier (*signifiant*) and the signified (*signifié*), the sign vehicle and meaning, respectively. Peirce's correlates to the sign included the representamen (sign vehicle), the interpretant (sense), and the object (referent). Nöth (1995) gives a synopsis of the dyadic sign, stating that it is not always possible to provide a definitive distinction between dyadic and triadic sign models and that there is a

zone of vagueness whenever a third correlate is mentioned but not systematically incorporated into the semiotic theory. Saussure's model is the prototype of a dyadic model. Although he mentions the "*chose*" in addition to the signifier and the signified, he rejects it as a third correlate of the sign.

Hjelmslev, while discussing reference in the domain of content-substance, also remains essentially dyadic in his concept of the sign. Furthermore, there are semioticians who postulate two aspects of the sign but consider the relation between sign vehicle and meaning to be the third component. (p. 87)

As for the triadic sign models, Nöth (1995) argues that those are reducible to dyads since they can either be subsequent or alternative dyads. He remarks that Locke's definition of dyads "implies two subsequent but still potentially independent dyads" meaning that "words are signs of ideas and ideas are signs of things". He also points out the distinction Anselm made "between *significatio*, the relation between word and concept, and *appellatio*, the relation between word and thing, implies two alternative dyads". Nöth furthermore observes that although the subsequent or alternative dyads present a theory that words can have either sense or reference, others have suggested the concept of genuine triads "claiming that there is always some sense *and* reference in signs". The idea of genuine triads is "based on the concept of mediation...: a third correlate is related to first via a second". This triadic structure of the sign has been presented in a diagram, referred to as the *semiotic triangle*, which shows the "three correlates of the sign in the order (1) sign vehicle, (2) sense, and (3) referent" (p. 89).

In semiotics, there is no uniform typology of signs. According to Nöth (1995), finding a common terminology is only part of the problem. He claimed that "it is also due to the multidimensionality of the criteria on which typologies of signs are an integral part of the semiotic theory of their authors" (p. 107). In Saussure's theory, signs are made up of sounds and images that he referred to as *signifiers* and the corresponding concepts as *signifieds*. He noted

I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a *sign*, but in current usage the term generally designated only a sound-image, a word, for example...I propose to retain the word *sign* [*signe*] to designate the whole and to replace

concept and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* [*signifié*] and *signifier* [*signifiant*]; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts. As regards *sign*, if I am satisfied with it, this is simply because I do not know of any word to replace it, the ordinary language suggesting no other. (Nöth, 1966, p. 67)

Peirce's theory included three different kinds of signs: icons, indexes, and symbols. In this trichotomy, *icons* indicate resemblance, *indexes* denote cause and effect, and *symbols* are based on conventions. Eco (1976) proposed to define a sign as “*everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else*” (p. 16, italics in original).

This study focuses on symbols as signs, looking at the nature of symbolic meanings from the connotational perspective of symbolism, which “defines the symbol as a sign to whose primary signifier a secondary meaning is added” (Nöth, 1995, p. 119). Nöth described the symbolic as the connotative as a view of symbolism which “characterizes symbols in contradistinction to other signs as having a ‘surplus of meaning’” and points out that “this theory is not incompatible with the iconic theory of the symbol, but the criterion of similarity is not essential to the nature of the connotation in this definition” (p. 118). The inclusion of connotation and denotation in the concepts of signified and signifier has been credited to Barthes and Hall (Moriarty, 2005). In her chapter on visual semiotics theory, Moriarty (2005) described the concept of denotation as “the direct, specific, or literal meaning we get from a sign. It is a description or representation of the signified—that is, language (or visual) specifically about the object” and connotation is the “meaning that is evoked by the object, that is, what it symbolizes on a subjective level” (p. 231). She also mentioned that in Barthes' work, “connotation reflects cultural meanings, mythologies, and ideologies” (p. 231) which is

expressed through a first and second level of meaning, or a “surplus of meaning”, as indicated earlier.

Symbol Theories

Symbols are usually described as arbitrary, which they are and have to be to a certain extent, as indicated earlier in the discussion of signs. Symbols mean different things to different people in different contexts. However, symbols cannot be entirely arbitrary or else there would be no meaningful communication. If any given symbol could mean anything to anybody, communication would become very difficult, if not impossible, and society as we know it would fall apart.

In his semiotics of cultural forms, Cassirer (1944) studied the embodiment and appearance of meaning in human life. His concept of *homo symbolicum*, derived from *animal symbolicum*, is based on the premise that the level of association between sign and meaning varies. The way signs and their meanings are connected depends on the transcendental nature of human language. Cassirer asserted that animals have the means to express emotions, they have not reached the next step from “subjective to objective, from affective to propositional language” (p. 30), thus remaining in the pre-linguistic spectrum. It is a uniquely human capacity to cognitively process propositional language. According to Cassirer, we need to distinguish between signs/signals and symbols. Animals react to and can distinguish between signals, which can be seen in dogs interacting with their masters, for instance. But “conditioned reflexes are not merely very far from but even opposed to the essential character of human symbolic thought” (p. 32). As human beings we share a symbol system through continuous communication that is embedded in the communities we are born into;

communication makes identity possible. Language and myth are related phenomena as one needs the symbol system of a language to create the narrative of a myth.

Eco (1984) generally distanced himself from Saussure's semiology, Levi-Strauss' structuralism, as well as from binary links such as between signifier and signified, and between sign, code and dictionary semantics. Instead, he advocated the process of unlimited semiosis as better suited to interpret signs and texts. His concept of the encyclopedia of codes can be seen as a revision of Pierce's idea of infinite semiosis where signs continue generating signs *ad infinitum*, thus pointing to the nature of semiotics as a continuous process, which can be interrupted but not necessarily ended. Eco (1992) expresses his perspective regarding the limits of interpretation in a lecture on overinterpretation. He states:

It is clear that I am trying to keep a dialectical link between *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris*. The problem is that, if one perhaps knows what is meant by "intention of the reader," it seems more difficult to define abstractly what is meant by "intention of the text." The text's intention is not displayed by the textual surface. Or, if it is displayed, it is so in the sense of the purloined letter. One has to decide to "see" it. Thus it is possible to speak of the text's intention only as a result of a conjecture on the part of the reader. The initiative of the reader basically consists in making a conjecture about the text's intention. A text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader...A text can foresee a model reader entitled to try infinite conjectures. (p. 64)

Eco's shift from a semiotics of communication to a semiotics of signification was initiated by his observation that dictionary-like semantics are too static and the notion of encyclopedia allows for a more dynamic model of abduction, or inference. That shift, according to Eco, allows us then to move past the linear connection of signifier and signified. Moving away from sign systems that focused on generating messages, the field of semiotics has been more concerned semiotics since the 1970s with the way those messages are being interpreted (de Lauretis, 1984).

The reason why this paradigmatic shift makes sense is because hermeneutics is presumed by semiotics. Eco, and other semioticians, understood the limits of semiotics, thus going beyond explaining meaning through difference presented in binary oppositions. Although binary oppositions and explaining meaning through difference are important, the conventions that binary oppositions are based on need to be put in context. If we are not familiar with a convention or tradition, then trying to understand the connotation that a particular symbol has for a particular community, such as a nation, becomes quite challenging. This is where Gadamer's (1975) perspective on difference and convention based in his philosophy of hermeneutics is useful. He acknowledges that conventions exist, but he also points out that they are real. Gadamer's notion of the hermeneutic circle includes the relationship between a reader and a text, as well as a relationship between a part and a whole. Thus, when reading a text, we take a part (a sentence, for example) and immediately form an opinion about this part with respect to an imagined or supposed whole; the whole changes as we keep reading more and more parts. Therefore, according to Gadamer, "understanding is already interpretation" where we have created a hermeneutic horizon "within which the meaning of a text comes to force" (p. 397). The circularity of this interpretive engagement has to do with moving back and forth between a certain preconception about the whole that we form from studying a part, moving then to the part, back to the whole, back to the part, and so forth, in a circular pattern.

The circular pattern involves our particular historical horizon (relationship between present and past) and some other historical horizon we are trying to come to terms with. We refer back and forth to what we know about the world before we

engage a text, what the text seems to be saying in relation to that which we know, how it might change my sense of what we know by referring back from what we know continuously to an understanding of the way in which the past text speaks. It is important to note that hermeneutics does not just take place across a historical bridge; it can also take place across a social or cultural bridge. When we engage each other in conversation we are still performing a hermeneutic act. I have to try to understand what you are saying and I have to refer it to what I want to say, and the circuit of communication between us has to stay open as a result of this mutual and developing understanding of what we are talking about. That also applies to conversations across cultures. Gadamer (1975) asserts,

A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there. (p. 266)

Hence, we cannot seem to be able to get away from the preliminary conceptions about things (there are useful/useless preconceptions, prejudices to let us into the circle). The great objection of Gadamer (1975) to other people's way of doing hermeneutics is that they believe that there is a methodology of interpretation. The basic methodology Gadamer is attacking here is historicism, which he sees as the belief that you can set aside preconception, that you can completely factor out your own point of view in order to enter into the mindset of some other time or place, into the mind of another (this is the object of historicizing). All you can do, according to Gadamer, is recognize that you do exist/live/think consciously within a certain horizon. As Heidegger (1962), who

greatly influenced Gadamer, observed, we cannot help understanding because we always already understand, which is not to say that we are right or wrong.

In 1990, Gadamer gave a lecture at the Universität Heidelberg, entitled *Die Vielfalt der Sprachen und das Verstehen der Welt* (trans. *The Multitude of Languages and the Understanding of the World*). During that lecture, he said that one has to develop one's own national language in order to say something and perhaps to understand others. As an example, he mentioned that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, first published in 1781, had to be translated from Latin to German. The use of the vernacular by scholars and the church in medieval times as well as translations of the Bible led to the development of national languages.

Language is only language when it leads to understanding and exchange, which Gadamer (1990) refers to as *Rede* and *Gegenrede* (also understood as question and answer). The original meaning of the word *world* in the Germanic and Indo-Germanic languages is *Menschenwelt*, human world. To understand oneself in the world (*sich verstehen in der Welt*), that is the task brought to us by the multitude of languages (*Vielfalt der Sprachen*), to paraphrase Gadamer. The world is also a horizon and since we live in a pluralistic world, we have multiple horizons. Gadmer gives a poignant example of the pluralistic world when he tells the audience about his encounter with an interpreter: in order to be successful, you need to convince and engage in a dialogue with the interpreter, as to avoid direct translations; if the interpreter is convinced, the interaction between the parties on each side of the interpreter will be more fruitful.

Hermeneutics was introduced as the art of discovering different levels of meaning. Ricoeur (1974), who has also been influenced by Heidegger, conceived of

human beings as linguistic beings, who express themselves in and through language, and who manifest their being. Although he generally subscribed to the notion that self-understanding can be reached through language, he also acknowledged that language has its problems as it is a very complex system. Some of the differences between Gadamer's and Ricoeur's perspectives regarding understanding should be noted here. Taylor (2011) pointed out that even though Ricoeur shared Gadamer's hermeneutic stance in many ways, including aspects of the fusion of horizons, he took it a step further by suggesting that understanding should be metaphoric. Consequently, Ricoeur's notion of understanding "is more of a product of tension between sameness and difference, an attempt to find similarity across, and despite, difference" (Taylor, 2011, p. 114) and stands in contrast to Gadamer's emphasis on similarity and commonality, which are supposed to lead to fused horizons. Taylor argues that Ricoeur's characterization of understanding as metaphoric seems more realistic and "does not require commonality in order for it to succeed" (p. 115).

When attempting to validate an interpretation in addition to verifying it empirically, Ricoeur (1986) asserted that we need to defend it against competing interpretations through the process of argumentation.

If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal... The text is a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism. It is always possible to argue against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach. (p. 160)

Furthermore, Ricoeur (1974) proposed to relate symbolic language to self-understanding, defining a symbol as "any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect,

secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first” (pp. 12-13). Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is inspired by two absolute poles: willingness to suspect and willingness to understand. Both are vital to his philosophy. Gadamer had the willingness to understand, but did not really have the willingness to suspect; Habermas has the willingness to suspect, but not so much the willingness to understand.

Here, it is necessary to briefly discuss the concept of deconstruction as it relates to the general discussion of symbols. Deconstruction is, as a thought process, somewhat evasive, whereby one does not quite settle for distinct positions, for an idea that can be understood as governed by an umbrella term, referred to by Derrida (1974) as a “transcendental signified”, a concept independent of language. Deconstruction is supposed to show that our thinking is not derived from one or another definite concept. This is where the idea of the center has an important role as it limits free play, which can be seen in an example given by Barthes (1979) when he talks about the experience of the Eiffel tower. In his essay, Barthes wrote “This pure—virtually empty—sign—is ineluctable, *because it means everything*”, and if one wanted to “negate the Eiffel Tower...you must...get up on it and, so to speak, identify yourself with it” (p. 4). It is a center that is outside the structure, a center that is not the center (Derrida, 1974); just arbitrarily in the middle, organizing everything without participating in the nature of anything.

In a comparison of symbols in semiotic landscapes, the example of the Eiffel Tower as a center that is not a center has its parallel in the now non-existent Twin Towers. The Twin Towers have a pathos and poignancy today that did not exist before the events of September 11. Their destruction suggests an ephemerality of the vertical

axis since the Twin Towers had a similar function in New York as the Eiffel Tower has in Paris; a view of the city with everything organized at its feet. A similar point regarding center and organization was made by Certeau (1984) in his essay about the Twin Towers before September 11. We have the need to make inferences from structures, spatial or otherwise, that we also need to acknowledge as tenuous and ephemeral. Lévi-Strauss (1963) admits that his approach to myth is itself only a version of the myth; it participates in the mythic way of thinking about things (in *Structural Anthropology* he refers to those as “mythemes” or “gross constituent units” of thought). It deploys and manipulates those gross constituent units of thought. In *Raw and the Cooked* (1969), however, he says that this form of the myth is scientific; the meaning of the myth is only discoverable in my science, instead of relying on other available myths. Those other myths, such as the Oedipian myth by Freud, Sophocles, etc., have equal merit as versions, but none of them is a transcendental signified, a causal explanation or meaning of the myth. He was thus denying the influence of Freud (e.g., it’s my myth, not his myth).

The combinatory structure of speech or writing, such as the binarism of relations, is broken down (i.e., signifier and signified, not signifier and signifier). This breakdown then leads to a signifying chain which is not an organizational pattern, but a self-replicating and linear self-extending pattern. It is a forward progression or sequence of temporal associations since sets of associations take place in time and are not floating in space. Hence the saying that history is just one damn thing after another: it does not exist in a systemic space, but it exists in an unfolding time. Structuralism is a problematic critique of genesis. Derrida (1978) proposed a critique of “structurality”,

which is more than just a critique of structuralism. It is a critique of the idea of anything that has a center because a center is an umbrella term, a transcendental signified. As a result, a center is something that explains the nature of the structure, and also, according to Derrida, something that allows for limited free play within the structure.

A center is both a center and not a center, according to Derrida (1978). In other words, both that which organizes a structure and that which is not qualified to organize anything because it is not in the structure; it is outside the structure, something that imposes itself from without on the structure (like a cookie cutter). Furthermore, the world is not anthropocentric, it is linguistic as argued by Cassirer (1944); as a result, language supplanted the previous transcendental signified human. In the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse; language is different because it's perpetually immersed in itself, it is not standing outside of what is going on. This is the critique of structuralism; language is not other than speech, it is perpetually manifest in speech. Language is not quite Saussurean because it is not just a system of signs understood as stable relationships between signifieds and signifiers.

A sign, traditionally understood, is self-sufficient and self-contained. Saussure (1966) made it a scientific object by saying that it is arbitrary and differential. A sign, under the critique of deconstruction, is something that is perpetually proliferating signification (i.e., it does not stand still), leaving "traces" (Derrida, 1978) as successive signs are influenced by those signs that precede it (supplementarity is a way of understanding that process of verbal expression). Difference is the Saussurean linguistic system, a system of differences, understood as spatial; *différance* introduces

the idea of deferral and reminds us that difference (i.e., our understanding of difference) is not something that is done in space, it is done in time. When I perceive a difference, I perceive it temporally; I defer difference as I do not understand the relation among signs as a simultaneity.

There is no nature unless you have culture to think it, which presumes a system of signs embedded in language. Cooked brings raw into being—we cannot know what raw is if we do not know what cooked is; raw as opposed to what? There cannot be ‘raw’ without the prior existence of cooked, the same way culture brings nature into being. For instance, we cannot experience nostalgia toward something we do not know. It is not an inversion of binaries, but a questioning of how they can exist apart from each other. Absolute interdependency of concepts is central to understanding of things; Judith Butler (1990; post-deconstruction) talked about the concept of heterosexuality that can only exist when we have the concept of homosexuality in place. Reality is there, and the referential function is perpetually in play in language, trying to connect to that reality.

The question thus becomes, if by using language we can know what things actually are, and not just that they are. According to de Man (1986), “what we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenism” (p. 11). In other words, ideology is nothing other than the belief that language, to be more precise my language, speaks true, which is different from saying that what is out there does not exist. As Derrida (1974) famously put it, “*there is nothing outside of the text*” (p. 158, italics in original). He was not denying the

importance of physical reality, but that there is nothing but text, which means that we cannot get outside of the text/reality.

In line with the argument regarding the emotional power of symbols and the connotational view of the symbolic, Firth's (1973) definition in his discussion on the scope and meaning of symbols proves quite useful here:

Symbol—where a sign has a complex series of associations, often of emotional kind, and difficult (some would say, impossible) to describe in terms other than partial representation. The aspect of personal or social construction in meaning may be marked, so no sensory likeness of symbol to object may be apparent to an observer, and imputation of relationship may seem arbitrary. (p. 75)

A further perspective on the connotational view of symbolism has been offered by Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology. He discusses the notion of the collective unconscious and archetypes in dream symbolism. According to Jung (1964), the human mind, or psyche, evolved historically just like the human physique did.

Jung (1964) defines a symbol as “term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown, or hidden from us” (p. 20), thus having “a wider ‘unconscious’ aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason” (pp. 20-21). He argues, that as modern humans have developed a greater consciousness over time, they have also become more dissociated from their inner world and the main connection and access to the unconscious we have now is through dreams:

As a general rule, the unconscious aspect of any event is revealed to us in dreams, where it appears not as a rational thought but as a symbolic image. As a

matter of history, it was the study of dreams that first enabled psychologists to investigate the unconscious aspect of conscious psychic events. (p. 23)

Henderson (1964) describes Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as "the part of the psyche that retains and transmits the common psychological inheritance of mankind" while pointing out that those symbols that are expressed in dreams "are so ancient and unfamiliar to modern man that he cannot directly understand or assimilate them" (p. 107). As for the concept of archetypes, what Freud called "archaic remnants," Jung defined as "mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate and inherited shapes of the human mind" (Jung, 1964, p. 67). Although Jung and Freud influenced each other, they eventually diverged due to their different views on the unconscious, Jung adding the deeper dimension of the collective unconscious he felt was missing from Freud's notion of collective psychic functioning with the unconscious.

As mentioned earlier, symbols carry an emotional element with them that is primarily responsible for their binding power and for bringing people together, whether it is the rallying around a flag, assigning personal values such as freedom to a statue, or gathering at a monument to commemorate loss. Although the author of this study is distancing herself from the mysticism route that Jung took in his work, he did provide some insightful observations regarding the emotional power of symbols and saw its potential in the archetypes:

We can perceive the specific energy of archetypes when we experience the peculiar fascination that accompanies them. They seem to hold a special spell...archetypes create myths, religions, and philosophies that influence and characterize whole nations and epochs of history. (Jung, 1964, p. 79)

He also made note of the affective appeal of symbols used in mythology that is present in collective action. Here is one example: “The energy of archetypes can be focused (through rituals and other appeals to mass emotion) to move people to collective action. The Nazis knew this, and used versions of Teutonic myths to help rally the country to their cause” (Jung, 1964, p. 79). Furthermore, he was aware of the resilience of symbols that presents itself in their enduring power throughout generations of civilizations, also referred to as eternal symbols that can be found in different cultures:

The cultural symbols, on the other hand, are those that have been used to express “eternal truths,” and that are still used in many religions. They have gone through many transformations and even a long process of more or less conscious development, and have thus become collective images accepted by civilized societies. (Jung, 1964, p. 93)

Thus, the affective dimension as well as the notion of resilience play into the phenomenological role of symbols that can motivate social change.

Another scholar who delved into the matter of symbolism in society was the sociologist Emile Durkheim. According to Janssen and Verheggen (1997), “Durkheim developed the prolegomena for a symbol theory that strikes a balance between the spiritual and the material aspects of man and society” (p. 294). They describe this theory as things having meaning because of the collective values they are bearing.

Janssen and Verheggen elaborate by using an example from Durkheim’s work:

A flag, as such, is only a piece of cloth from which no emotional meaning can be derived. However, the emotional meaning of the flag can become so dramatic that people are willing to sacrifice their life for it. The flag is the bearer of the notion of collectivity; it represents the soul of society and, as such, the flag is sacred. (p. 294)

Emphasizing Durkheim’s rejection of functionalism, and arguing that the “traditional outlooks are based on either a one-sidedly cognitivist and/or a one-sidedly relativist

interpretation of Durkheim's symbol theory" (Janssen & Verheggen, 1997, p. 295), they assert that Durkheim's mode of argument and method was of dialectical nature, which is not to be confused with Hegel's dialectics. One of the examples of his dialectical style was his integration of the two constructions regarding the relationship between individual and society. While his work on religion can be read as cognitivist to a degree, as well as somewhat relativist regarding culture, "for Durkheim, collective representations essentially find their origin in highly emotional—even ecstatic—collective gatherings" and Durkheim "not only underlined the emotional aspect of the symbol, he also emphasized the behavioral aspect. People have to act, and rituals are of crucial importance in the formation of social life" (Janssen & Verheggen, 1997, p. 295).

In order to balance the reception of Durkheim's symbol theory, Janssen and Verheggen (1997) suggest studying his work through a Schopenhauerian lens.

Although they do not provide a detailed discussion of Schopenhauer's philosophy and his influence on Durkheim, they point out that

Schopenhauer proposes a fundamental unity between the principle of living and being—the will—and its epistemological counterpart—the representation. For Schopenhauer, the world is will *and* representation. In this antagonistic unity, the "lower pole" is associated with the will, with matter, instincts, the body, emotions, the profane, and nonrationality. The higher pole, the representation, is associated with the mind, reflection, reason, the sacred, and culture in the sense of civilization. (p. 296)

Janssen and Verheggen (1997) state that Durkheim's aim was the middle road, "so he need not postulate that individual and society, body and mind, sociology and psychology are mutually exclusive" (p. 299). They claim that Durkheim was trying to find that middle road between two monocausal explanations, also referred to as monisms, aiming for an notion of symbols that views the symbol as "an indivisible,

dualistic whole” (p. 299). One of the monisms offers explanations of human behavior towards subjects on a material level, the other monism focuses on the spiritual level. Thus they infer that, instead of accepting either one-sidedness, Durkheim “seeks to develop a symbol theory that steers clear of both extremes. Symbols are combinations of objects and meanings, combinations of inner nature and outwards appearance. Both the object and its meaning are important, but the combination is decisive” (Janssen & Verheggen, 1997, p. 299).

An important concept in Durkheim’s theoretical writings on society that is relevant to this study regarding the contagious social force that is mobilizing movements and revolutions is *collective effervescence*. Shilling (2005) discusses the concept, describing the potential emotional qualities that social assembly and interaction can have on people. Collective effervescence was a term that Durkheim used to “capture the idea of social force at its birth, and it is the power of this effervescence that allows individuals to be incorporated into the collective moral life of the tribe or clan” (Shilling, 2005, p. 215). Thus, the changes induced in individuals by collective effervescence create “emotional capacities” that are “collectively stimulated and structured through various rituals that ‘fix’ them to those symbols that are central to people’s identity and understanding” (Shilling, 2005, p. 215). Here the relationship between the sacred and the profane comes into play when the emotional component of symbols comes to the foreground.

A crucial observation in Durkheim’s theory of totemism is the transference of energy to symbols and how that in turn affects individuals’ sense of identity. Consequently, Durkheim (1912/1995, p. 221) notes, “the symbol thus takes the place of

the thing, and the emotions aroused are transferred to the symbol. It is the symbol that is loved, feared and respected” (as cited in Shilling, 2005, p. 215). That transference of emotional energy to collective symbols is ultimately giving them meaning, turning them into powerful tools to deliver persuasive messages, which is especially useful during times of social change.

For symbols to work as efficient identifiers of particular groups or nations and to evoke a sense of belonging that facilitates social mobilization while creating collective effervescence, they need to have an element that is viewed as sacred by the respective group or nation.

The collective effervescence linked with the experience of the sacred is so powerful, that Durkheim...argues that there can be no society without a sense of the sacred: the sacred energizes the symbolic order of society and motivates people to act in relation to the moral norms of that order. (Shilling, 2005, p. 221)

When emotionally charged collective symbols stimulate action that becomes contagious and evolves into a movement, the direction of the movement can have unpredictable consequences. Shilling (2005) discusses the example of the French Revolution in 1789, where the

general stimulation of energies...produced both sublime and savage moments, superhuman heroism and bloody barbarism, as ordinary individuals became transformed into new, more extreme beings....Effervescent actions also transformed a range of profane phenomena into sacred things which *strengthened* revolutionary society. Despite the avowedly anti-religious character of the Revolution, notions of Fatherland, Liberty and Reason assumed a sacred quality. (p. 222, italics in original)

Shilling (2005) also mentions the example of the soldier and the flag that Janssen and Verheggen (1997) discuss in their article, as quoted earlier. He adds that the notion the “effervescent power that has been invested in the flag is such that Durkheim talks of the

flag *itself* sometimes causing action” (p. 222, italics in original). Once again, the emotional energy that is being transferred into a symbol can render it sacred, compelling the individual or group to identify themselves with the symbol and act on behalf of the collective life of a nation, for instance.

Another example of the unpredictable consequences of effervescent action can be witnessed in fascist movements. Shelling (2005) notes that the “essential ambivalence of the effervescent actions generated by the sacred is a theme that was illustrated by the mass ceremonies, rituals and genocidal destruction characteristic of Nazism prior to and during the Second World War” (p. 223). Although one might have some reservations regarding Durkheim’s contribution in light of the possibility of disastrous effects that effervescent action could have, as Shilling points out, his work continues to be valuable for describing social and cultural change today.

A relevant application of Durkheim’s ideas to the present study that Shelling (2005) briefly mentions is Tiryakian’s (1995) discussion of social change and collective action in the context of the *velvet revolutions* of 1989. Tiryakian suggests recombining Durkheim’s concept of collective effervescence with Weber’s concept of charisma to offer a meaningful interpretation of the dynamics of the historical developments that led to the crumbling of the Soviet empire.

Durkheim and Weber both look at unusual, extraordinary periods for challenges to institutionalised authority, and for these challenges to take place, the actors involved must transcend the attitudes of everyday life; for Durkheim and Weber alike, actors must be capable of acts of heroism born out of enthusiasm. The assembling of the group is background to Weber’s discussion of charismatic leadership, and it is foreground to Durkheim. Durkheim’s discussion, without using the term, does make room for what we can recognise in Weber as charismatic authority. (Tiryakian, 1995, p. 273)

Tiryakian (1995) also talks about the unpredictable nature of social change as well as the remarkable speed with which the change occurred in former communist countries of Eastern Europe. He argues that some of that change can be attributed to the contagious nature of collective effervescence that helped spread ideas of democratic reform and maintained the momentum of protests that kept erupting across the region. Thus, while acknowledging external, exogenous factors, such as the new reform leadership of the Communist Party, the mass media in the 1980s adding more loopholes to the Soviet empire, the economic conditions, the internal decay, and the corruption of the regime, he also points out that those are

not sufficient to account for the revolution. What played an equally important part in this most unexpected social becoming was grass-roots social mobilisation, with students and intellectuals playing an important role in what I view as movements of national renewal, digging deep into the seemingly buried cultural capital to restore or revivify collective symbols that had been though laid to rest by the communist regimes. Social mobilisation, the coming together of persons in public places, had been, of course, used by fascist and communist regimes, but the social mobilisation seen in 1988-91 was on a voluntary basis, very much in keeping with Durkheim's discussion of the social assembly. (p. 276)

Dimensional Accrual of Dissociation Theory

Given the primary focus on the emotional aspect of national symbols and their presence in myths of origin, the theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation (DAD) is useful for discussing the sources of the affective power of symbols. According to Kramer (2012), the "theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation synthesizes two powerful ideas; dissociation and consciousness structuration. The result is a new understanding of culture as a form of expression" (p. 124). Through a synthesis of the work of Jean Gebser and Lewis Mumford and an interpretation of "consciousness structure as communicative phenomenon, the theory of dimensional accrual and

dissociation (DAD) offers a solid approach to understanding cultures and intercultural misunderstandings” (p. 137).

Kramer (2012) describes the different dimensions as types of worlds, which are based on Geber’s (1985) structures of consciousness. The full spectrum of worlds in the DAD theory includes the archaic world, the magic idolic world, the mythic symbolic world, the perspectival signalic world, and the aperspectival world. For the purposes of this study, the magic, mythic, and perspectival dimensions will be primarily discussed, as they are well suited to serve as an analytical guide for answering the questions asked here. In order to be able to discern some of the patterns that can explain the emotional power of national symbols and how that power of symbols motivates members of a nation to mobilize when their freedoms are compromised, one has to acknowledge and understand the differences in consciousness structures as they inform actions and communication.

Although elements of the different worlds can be present in groups and individuals at times, there is a “tendency to manifestly express predominantly one or another structure” (Kramer, 2012, p. 143). Kramer emphasizes that none of the worldviews is superior to the other; the progression from one dimension to the next does not presume the concept of progress as evolution. Instead, it suggests that one structure might be more efficient than another, depending on the need. Thus, if a collective, national or otherwise, needs to find a way to ensure cohesion and mobilize its members to join a common cause, the more efficient way to communicate would be through an appeal to emotion instead of rational reason.

The magic worldview is spaceless and timeless, as well as one-dimensional and pre-perspectival. This worldview

exhibits an idolic incantatory mode of communication that is identically univalent. This means that, to the magic person, the statue of god *is* god. This piece of wood *is literally* a piece of the actual cross on which Christ was crucified. (Kramer, 2012, p. 145, italics in original)

Cultural and religious groups often times co-opt and resanctify sacred traditions from other faiths according to their own beliefs. Christianity has done that with many of its traditions and symbols, such as turning the originally pagan holiday of winter solstice into a celebration of Christmas, which includes a Christmas tree, also a former pagan symbol. In the magic worldview, harmony and stability is preferred at the expense of change. The one-dimensional structure bestows magic objects with great power to influence people through their emotional qualities. Thus, if a seemingly rational person witnesses a parade displaying national symbols, such as flags and the signing of an anthem, they might be involuntarily moved because those symbols speak to their sense of belonging to a group. They feel (which is where the magic takes over and rationality goes out the window) the connection, *amor patriae*, evoked by what they know as a magic sign. And they know that sign because it is a part of the system of symbols, a recognizable code. Kramer (2012) wrote, “magic objects embody what modern philosophers in their way call absolute logocentrism. Nations that built the most powerful military technologies of their times, such as V-2 Rockets and massive battleships, were inspired and infused with magic and myth” and denying “the continued efficacy of magic and myth is to underestimate their power and to possibly fall under the spell” (p. 147). This is an example of the potential danger of the

emotional power of nationalism; when feelings of patriotism turn into the spell of nationalism the consequences can be dire.

The mythic worldview is proto-spatial and cyclically temporal, as well as two-dimensional and unperspectival. This worldview “manifests a symbolic mode of communication that exhibits bivalent am-bi-guity between figural and literal meaning and a semi-linear proto-spatial narrative form” (Kramer, 2012, p. 152). Here the separation of meanings into figural and literal makes interpretation possible, polarity begins to emerge in mythic symbolism, not to be confused with duality as expressed through binary oppositions. The fragmentation into signified and signifier is not yet complete in the mythic consciousness, but it is decidedly moving in that direction. Here, again, Christianity efficiently uses the mythic structure, where “wine symbolizes the blood of Christ. A crucifix is semi-sacred, neither identical with God not totally arbitrary in form or intent/motive” (p.153). The polarity of the sacred and the profane, as well as the metaphors of light and dark, are crucial components in the creation of myths, which plays an important role for the analysis of national symbols in this study, as evidenced in the discussion section. It also helps explain why the binding power of religion “fragments into sectarian violence and wars of ideology, not simply of plunder and the acquisition of tribute, commence” (p. 155).

The perspectival worldview is spatial and abstractly temporal, as well as three-dimensional and perspectival. This worldview “manifests a signalic mode of communication exhibiting trivalent arbitrary meaning” and is “predominant in the cultural modality known as modernity” (Kramer, 2012, p. 159). The fragmentation into signified and signifier is now complete and meaning is assigned arbitrarily and is

conventional. This fragmentation opens the way to conflicts of interpretations, resulting in cultural wars between competing ideologies. In the perspectival consciousness structure, meaning is decided through the interactive process of binary oppositions, if there is a meaning at all. Another potential ramification of the claim to a completely arbitrary relationship between signified and signifier is relativism, which leads to uncertainty and instability in the modern world. The “modern hope” to fix this problem and avoid the consequences of relativism has been problematic due to the “dissociation of meaning from expression, intent from act, for the perspectival person, there no longer exists a sense that the body of the expression and its mind or meaning have anything in common” (p. 160). The consciousness structures are on a continuum, as dimensions accrue, dissociation increases.

For a hermeneutics of national symbols, the three consciousness structures discussed above supplement the semiotic principles that are jointly applied throughout the analysis. In order to analyze national symbols we need a better understanding of the bigger picture, which necessarily includes the idea of the nation and nationalism to further contextualize the unit of analysis. The next section is an overview of nationalism theories and the differences between the more prominent nationalism scholars who represent different schools of thought.

Nationalism: An Overview

When it comes to offering a definition of nationalism, the task is quite daunting, and as usual, it depends on whom you ask to formulate that definition. Goldmann, Hannerz, and Westin (2000) argue that “political philosophers with normative preoccupations may strive towards impeccable formulations of nationalism or

internationalism” (p. 2) whereas “many anthropologists, sociologists and members of some other disciplines” are “perhaps more ready to accept that in their everyday forms, nationalisms and internationalisms may be fragmented, situationally shifting, and internally inconsistent” (p. 3). Some of the problems when trying to define nationalism stem from the tendency to focus on the state more than on the masses, which takes away from the emotional appeal of nationalism and turns it mostly into a civic debate, downplaying or ignoring the persistence and “enduring power” of ethnonationalism (Muller, 2008). As Muller observes,

the conventional narrative of European history asserts that nationalism was primarily liberal in the western part of the continent and that it became more ethnically oriented as one moved east. There is some truth to this, but it disguises a good deal as well.... Liberal nationalism, that is, was most apt to emerge in states that already possessed a high degree of ethnic homogeneity. Long before the nineteenth century, countries such as England, France, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden emerged as nation-states in polities where ethnic divisions had been softened by a long history of cultural and social homogenization.” (pp. 2-3)

The nation as a modern social form has been undergoing a transformation, rather than disappearing. In the nineties, some scholars suggested that the nation-state was being replaced by a new global order (Appadurai, 1997; Bauman, 1998), but more recent research, which focused on national and transnational media systems, has revealed that the nation-state is in fact a much more resilient social form across the world (Curran & Park, 2000). Calhoun (1997) presents one of the more insightful perspectives on nationalism, describing it as a continuous discursive process that is always being expressed and contested.

In the Oxford Reader on nationalism, Hutchinson and Smith (1994) ask the crucial questions: “Can we envisage a world without nations or nationalism? To what

extent has the concept of national identity been transformed in a global era?” (p. 287).

In order to be able to answer this question, the definitions in the existing literature on nationalism are examined and compared across various disciplines.

According to Smith’s (1991) perspective on national identity, nations and nationalism, have to be treated as cultural phenomena in order to be understood, not just in ideological or political form, “That is to say, *nationalism*, the ideology and movement, must be closely related to *national identity*, a multidimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments, and symbolism” (p. vii, italics in original). In his outline of the elements of national identity, Smith defines a nation as “*a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members*” (p. 14, italics in original). He acknowledges that there are a lot of disputes when it comes to define what a nation is and no single one definition is unproblematic. That also explains why scholars of nationalism do not have a unified understanding where nationalism starts and what its boundaries are. Most of them agree however that nationalism is a very current issue still:

The age of globalization is also the age of nationalist resurgence, expressed both in the challenge to established nation-states and in the widespread (re)construction of identity on the basis of nationality, always affirmed against the alien. This historical trend has surprised some observers, after nationalism has been declared deceased by a triple death: the globalization of the economy and the internationalization of political institutions; the universalism of a largely shared culture, diffused by electronic media, education, literacy, urbanization, and modernization; and the scholarly assault on the very concept of nations. (Castells, 2004, p. 30)

Castells (2004) presents his definition of nations in what he calls the information age as “*cultural communes constructed in people’s minds and collective memory by the*

sharing of history and political projects” (p. 54, italics in original). His approach to nationalism and national identity is quite different from that of Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm (1992), and Anderson (2006). Both, Gellner and Hobsbawm outlined the historical events that were crucial in the formation of nation-states with nationalistic patterns to follow, and both envisioned the ideal development as a construction of a modern, sovereign nation-state. Gellner’s view of the “high cultures” of the elite versus the “low cultures” of the majority of the population has been criticized by Smith (2001), Edensor (2002), Castells (2004), and others, not surprisingly so, given that for Gellner (1983), “nationalisms are simply those tribalisms, or for that matter any kind of groups, which through luck, effort or circumstance succeed in becoming an effective force under modern circumstances” (p. 87).

Hobsbawm’s (1992) account of nationalism is problematic because he sees the “masses” as being coerced through the ideological messages from the culture industries that are reinventing and restaging traditions to sustain cultural, and thus national identity. Those traditions, according to Edensor (2002), should be seen as much more flexible since they are not fixed, and instead of trying to emulate those traditional cultural spectacles as closely to the historic original as possible, they should be reconstructed and connected to the current times. Hobsbawm (1992) distinguishes himself from Gellner by opposing his notion of “high cultures” as the only origin of nationalism, however, according to Castells (2004), “against Hobsbawm’s and Anderson’s views, nationalism as a source of identity cannot be reduced to a particular historical period and to the exclusive workings of the modern nation-state” (p. 34).

Hutchinson and Smith (1994), who disagree with Gellner and Hobsbawm observe a contestation of the concept of the nation on two fronts, one being “rival scholarly definitions” and the other being a type of identity competing with other collective identities. They contend that

while it is recognized that the concept of the nation must be differentiated from other concepts of collective identity like class, region, gender, race, and religious community, there is little agreement about the role of ethnic, as opposed to political, components of the nation; or about the balance between ‘subjective’ elements like will and memory, and more ‘objective’ elements like territory and language; or about the nature and role of ethnicity in national identity. (p. 4)

Their claim does not stand in opposition to Castells’ (2004) work. In fact, Castells is quite supportive of Smith’s theoretical manifestations on the question of nationalism and national identity, who in his later work argued that nationalism can go beyond nations, a rather congruent standpoint with that presented by Castells and his theory of the ever-expanding network society.

Theories and Theorists of Nationalism

Gellner’s (1983) approach to nationalism has been classified as modernist, or instrumentalist to a certain extent. According to Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism*, the phenomenon of nationalism is a product of the modern society, which developed throughout the process of industrialization. He claims that pre-modern, agrarian societies did not have the necessary conditions for nationalism to emerge. Thus, nationalism underwent the transition from agrarian to industrial/modern, society. The “age of transition to industrialism” is linked, in Gellner’s view, to the “age of nationalism” (p. 40) and was naturally accompanied by violence and conflict as a response to the drastic changes of the new development. The new division of labor that

was brought by modernization and the notion of progress led to a different kind of specialization and high mobility.

One of the most striking results of the modernized division of labor in industrial society was the change in the educational system, which became the least specialized that has existed so far, in contrast to the degree of specialization in most other areas. Gellner notes, “a man’s education is by far his most precious investment, and in effect confers his identity on him” (p. 36). He goes even further to portray state and culture as inseparable for one’s production and re-production (possible thanks to standardization): “The imperative of exo-socialization is the main clue to why state and culture *must* now be linked....Now it is unavoidable. That is what nationalism is about, and why we live in an age of nationalism” (p. 38, italics in original).

In his discussion of typology of nationalisms, Gellner (1983) describes the core element of nationalism as being

about entry to, participation in, identification with, a high literate culture which is co-extensive with an entire political unit and its total population, and which must be of this kind if it is to be compatible with the kind of division of labor, the type or more of production, on which this society is based. (p. 95)

He posits that the essence of nationalism is the close relationship between state and culture, nationalism consisting of three major factors: “power, education, and shared culture” (p. 97). Gellner’s state-centered approach of nationalism with its dependence on his concept of “high-culture” renders it as distinctively modern, dismissing the possibility of prior ethnicity as the origin of nationalism, and claiming that “it is nationalism which engenders nations and not the other way round” (p. 55). This

approach is problematic because it cannot explain the affective power of national identity, it underestimates changes in cultural patterns that existed prior to nationalism, leading towards it, and it seems to ignore ethnic identities or treat them as given.

Most nationalism scholars of the twentieth century, such as Kohn, Seton-Watson, Kedourie, and others, claim that nationalism cannot be explained by pre-existing ethnicity. In Gellner's (1983) view, ethnicity is not a sufficient explanation for the emergence of nationalism, which he bases on his presentation of specific cases of failed or absent nationalisms. This point can also be seen in his view concerning culture, which he regards as important but not constitutive. Here, again, he is arguing against tradition and culture—both being linked to ethnicity—as not having sufficient explanatory power.

Culture becomes powerful when it transitions into “high culture” that leads to homogenization and standardization of society. Hence culture in the industrial society became an organizing principle: new division of labor, education, advanced communications systems, mobility, etc. This principle is crucial to the resulting homogenized culture necessary for the foundation of nationalism. But how does this process of creating or constructing a new cultural identity work? The transition into this new identity in more concrete contexts is barely explained and needs further exploration and analysis. He also mentions that national identity can feel “ardently” yet he does not enlighten us how exactly such functional necessities can actually lead to the powerful emotions caused by identification.

Smith's (1988) ethnosymbolist approach to nationalism stands in contrast to Gellner's (1983). Smith sees the origin of nations in a pre-modern context, his

ethnosymbolist perspective being a synthesis of the modern and the traditional. According to Smith, nations have “ethnic cores” and remain an entity through solidarity, a bond they perceive to exist with the nation as well as the individual members of the nation. He describes those ethnic cores as *ethnie*, or ethnic communities that he defines as “named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity” (p. 32). Thus, nationalist sentiment can emerge through the local prevalent/dominant ideology.

Smith (1988) rejects the notion that nations are a recent development emerging from industrialism, as Gellner (1983) would argue, instead, he sees them as pre-modern with ethnic foundations. He pointedly states that religious factors are “the pivotal elements in crystallizing and maintaining ethnic identity” (p. 124). Smith does not fundamentally disagree that nationalism as a philosophy is emerging during the time of the industrialization process in the late eighteenth century, however, he insists that nations as socially and politically organized units do not have a modern origin. He also distances himself from purely primordialist approaches that claim the givenness and natural character of nations. Smith acknowledges both, primordialist and modernist theoretical strands, positioning himself in between and adopting a perennialist outlook. In other words, he steers between modernism and instrumentalism, and between primordialism and perennialism. According to Smith, modernity transformed human loyalties and the “triple transformations” led to types of nationalism that emerged.

But what exactly are ethnies? Are they agents or structures? Are they institutions or identities? Do they impose or encourage interest in maximized behavior?

Smith (1988) delineates two basic kinds of ethnies that are equally important: vertical and lateral. The vertical (demotic) ethnies span across social strata and is ephemeral, it can be very intense but fades quicker and is less stable. The lateral (aristocratic) ethnies, spread more broadly, but structures do not penetrate deeply. Smith argues that the vertical ethnies, including the vast majority, have to become more exclusive, and what he calls “messianic” (borrowing from Walter Benjamin’s *Illuminations*—“Messianic Time”), and the vertical ethnies have to become more exclusive, enfranchising. The question is then, does ethnic identity have coercive emotional power? Primordialists have been criticized for basing their claims of the emotional course of power, but denying the emotional power does not provide the answer either. Modernists, on the other hand, have been criticized for assuming that power creates analytical problems. Thus, Smith attempts to offer the middle ground, suggesting that mythic structures persist.

One of Smith’s (1988) main strengths is his excellent command of historical contextualization. He makes a very compelling case for his argument of the pre-modern/ancient existence of ethnic states by presenting a wide array of historical evidence (though this kind of evidence is not always unproblematic) for this existence. Another strong point in Smith’s work is his attempt at explaining the affective force of nationalist sentiment through his concept of *mythomoteur* that refers to the powerful meanings of symbols and myths that make ethnies so pervasive and persistent. He does not claim ethnicity to be natural instead of being socially constructed but he argues that ethnicity is only very slow to alter. Smith argues that there is a possibility to trace a “genealogy of nations” where *ethnies* become nations, which can be accounted for

through the introduction of cultural and social structural variables. The potential for political mobilization is tied to this cultural transformation of *ethnie* members into citizens (the “triple Western revolution”). However, emphasizing almost exclusively the symbolic and affective dimension of ethnicity might prove problematic as well as claiming the continuity of ethnic groups. Could it be that ethnicity is perhaps a product of manipulation, a creation of the elites? That is a conceptual question that Smith does not address and that can be used as a counter-argument, which is not my intent here, but it definitely offers ground for debate.

Anderson’s (1983/2006) concept of nationalism is categorized as a constructivist approach. He defines the nation as an imagined political community due to its inherent limitedness and sovereignty. Accordingly, Anderson sees that political community as imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). In other words, he describes nations as imagined, as opposed to actual communities, because the affinity to other community members (co-nationals) is mainly possible through the mental image of the affinity.

Anderson’s (1983) explanation of how nationalism comes into being is through change in social consciousness, in contradistinction to changes in social structure, as proposed by Gellner (1983), and to Smith (1988) who defines elements of continuity (triple transformation). The strength in Anderson’s approach is that it bridges the gap since it is linked to changes in political consciousness as well. Another strength of the constructivist approach as employed by Anderson is that it is more useful for evaluating identities than the modernist or instrumentalist approach, for instance. Following

constructivism, identities can be manipulated (i.e., constructed) and affect is accepted as a necessary compound of identity. Anderson's weakness becomes apparent when he conflates national consciousness with nationalism, which is more problematic when he talks about Europe, though he does better in his discussion of the colonies. He sees nations and nationalism as creations of modernity that are means to political and economic ends, and imagined communities being a form of social constructivism. In contrast to Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1992), he values the idealistic/utopian element in nationalism, and he does not see nationalism as obsolescent in the globalizing world. Another contrast to Gellner and many other nationalism theorists is Anderson's claim that the European nation-state came into being as the response to nationalism in the European Diaspora beyond the ocean, in colonies (in both Americas). He sees nation-state building as an "imitative" action.

Although Gellner and Anderson can both be classified as modernist, they differ substantially on social consciousness. Anderson's use of constructivism is useful regarding social consciousness because this perspective is pointing out contingencies, unintended consequences that arise from systems of identifications and categorizations—with the result of identity. Of course, one of the limitations of constructivism, which is also one of the constructivists' contempt, is the messiness of the approach. The frequent usage of the concept of identity to explain almost every major social phenomenon becomes axiomatic and leads to the objectification of a subjective concept, given that, in order to talk about identity, we have to treat it objectively. The alternative to this objectification of identity, is deconstruction, a concept from postmodernist philosophy. Another alternative would be to stop using the

term identity and aggregate the concept instead. What is often times problematic with all the concepts discussed here, such as the nation, is that those are categories of practice *and* analysis. Thus, primordial forces do exist, but that does not mean that primordialism is the explanation, which is why constructivists often make recourse to instrumentalism and primordialism.

Hechter's (2001) approach to nationalism is quite distinct from some of the previous works, including Gellner, Smith, and Anderson. He does mention the onset of industrialization and modernity as crucial to the emergence of nationalism, but he deems those processes as insufficient explanations for the emergence of nationalism. Instead, he focuses more on the effects of direct vs. indirect rule on group solidarity, taking an instrumentalist perspective. According to Hechter (2001), "the greater the proportion of each member's resources contributed to the group's ends, the greater the group's solidarity" (p. 21). Due to group solidarity, group members contribute their resources to comprise the joint good, on a larger scale, the nation: "*Thus the articulation and promotion of culturally distinctive institutions is the joint good that lies at the core of nation-formation*" (p. 23, italics in original). However, in order to prevent free riders from having access to the joint good, social controls are established that in turn create social boundaries, and those eventually extend to physical boundaries (i.e., territoriality). One of Hechter's main arguments is that it was the enactment of the direct rule that gave rise to nationalism. He points out that through direct rule, as opposed to indirect rule, the dependence on the centre is stronger and the demand for self-determination becomes an issue. Hechter proposes that, "if nationalism is collective action designed to make the boundaries of the nation and the governance unit

congruent, then it can only emerge when there is a disjuncture between the boundaries of the nation and those of the governance unit” (p. 36).

Hechter’s (2001) argument is strong in the pragmatic sense due to his attempt at proposing actual policies instead of just theorizing and staying in the philosophical realm of the issue at hand. However, the practical implications of the hypotheses posited in his work get lost at times because Hechter does not demonstrate their testability, or even the intent to test his claims. Another weakness to be observed in Hechter’s theory is generally a problem in the instrumentalist approach to nationalism: (1) the primary focus is elites; (2) explaining nationalist violence becomes a challenge. The latter challenge can be overcome, or at least aided, by acknowledging some of the explanatory power of the primordialist approach. Although it would not be wise to solely rely on primordialism as a complete explanation for nationalism as previously mentioned, the aspect of affect in nationalist movements that makes them so powerful is better accounted for in primordialist explanations, thus instrumentalists could benefit by implementing some of those explanations instead of just reacting to them and deeming them obsolete. However, instrumentalism is not alone with this problem, the modernist and institutionalist schools of thought are facing similar limitations.

The instrumentalist approach, a reaction to primordialism, sees ethnic groups as defined by boundaries rather than content, thus accounting for the movement of ethnic boundaries, which in turn allows for changes of identity. The two core aspects of instrumentalism are distribution and domination. Politics is a distributive game, a zero-sum relationship where one’s gain is another one’s loss. The aspect of domination refers to the decision of who actually does the distributing. So, what are the

implications? Instrumentalists would argue that identity is situational, a matter of choice, and does not exist without the political dimension. If identity is relative and positional, why is it so powerful? This goes back to the problems and challenges of instrumentalism mentioned earlier and is one of its weaknesses when it comes to address the affective power of identity that can results in nationalist violence.

In Hechter's (2001) discussion of the cultural division of labor the question arises, what is the difference between national identity and social class? Hechter's response would be that nationality is not class because nations are already there. He also claims that it is a good idea to devolve power because there would be fewer opportunities to mobilize. In that case, how do we contain nationalism without enticing it? Again, this is a challenge to Hechter's instrumentalist argument.

Brubaker (1996) proposes a triadic relationship for the phenomenon of nationalism: (1) "nationalizing" nationalisms; (2) homeland nationalisms; and (3) national minorities. He mainly bases his analysis on the case of post-communist nationalisms in contemporary Eastern Europe, comparing those with the nationalisms of the interwar period. Both nationalisms emerged after the breakup of multinational states into would-be nation-states. Brubaker emphasizes that "nations," or what he refers to as nationhood and nation-ness, are categories of practice, sometimes incorrectly conflated into categories of analysis. Thus he advocates the practical uses of the category "nation." What seems new to Brubaker's categorization is his description of the independence and mutual antagonism between the elements of the relational nexus mentioned above, creating tensions that are in turn exploited by elites and counter elites. Also different in his approach is his view on nationhood as an institutionalized

form, and nation-ness as event as opposed to development, a view held by Gellner, Anderson, Smith, and Hobsbawm, according to Brubaker.

Brubaker's (1996) emphasis on contingency shows a weak point because he does not address the institutional origins, he just says that it does happen. So what does the institutionalist approach predict? Does the institutionalization of identity lead to collapse (Brubaker's example of internal passports during the Soviet regime)? Or is it the actual institutional structure? Brubaker shows how relational fields can exacerbate institutions and that there can be variation, i.e., stances that are adopted can vary. What is the interrelationship between stances then? One example is what Brubaker calls the "homeland nationalism" in Russia. This notion of homeland nationalism seems to be an ad hoc explanation and poses an empirical problem. Why didn't it work? Because there was no demand. What historical and sociological institutionalists miss is that power is emphasized in the creation of institutions. Sociological institutionalists, such as Brubaker, do not provide an explanation where that power comes from. This is also a shortcoming regarding the power of affect in identity.

Billig's (1995) approach moves away from the tendencies to develop macro-theories that many of the other theorists have attempted. Instead, Billig focuses on the everyday display of nationalism, primarily in the West.

To stretch the term 'nationalism' indiscriminately would invite confusion: surely, there is a distinction between the flag waved by Serbian ethnic cleansers and that hanging unobtrusively outside the US post office; or between the policy of the Front National and the support given by the leader of the opposition to the British government's Falkland's policy. For this reason, the term **banal nationalism** is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far

form being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition. (p. 6)

He emphasizes that banal does not mean benign at all and he warns of the danger of the seemingly subtle display of national symbols, such as the ubiquitous presence of flags, in everyday life. Those symbols serve as reminders and are “flagging” nationhood unflaggingly, to put it into Billig’s (1995) terms (p. 41). He remarks that the flagging is occurring routinely and does not require a conscious activity, thus differing from consciously orchestrated commemorative events.

Billig (1995) also points to the distinction between “hot” and banal nationalism, referring to the seemingly conventional view that nationalism only occurs when there is a social disruption, a crisis, or any other extreme situation that appears to threaten a nation-state and is evoking a passionate response, thus making it hot. He warns that nationalism never entirely disappears, even during times of no crisis. The continuous “flagging” of national symbols keeps the potentially nationalist spirit alive, “unflaggingly”, which, in turn, ensures readiness and responsiveness of citizens in case of a national threat or conflict.

A criticism of Billig’s (1995) account has been directed toward the way he fails to adequately address the complexity of “national life” in Britain, one of his major examples of banal nationalism in the West. As Skey (2009) points out,

as theorists, we cannot assume that particular representations of the nation are resonant or relevant for all (and at all times) who happen to live within a particular political theory, just because they are associated with powerful institutional actors or agencies. (p. 342)

However, Billig (1995) quite accurately observes the persistence of the nation-state and universal ideology of nationalism, acknowledging the success of the nation-state,

regardless of its origin. He refers to nationhood as the “universal form of sovereignty” and compares it to examples of territorial limitations of such ideologies as liberalism, Marxism, Christendom, and Islam, which pale in comparison to the international ideology of nationalism. He further states that the “nation-state abhors a territorial vacuum” and “the boundary-consciousness of nationalism has itself known no boundaries in its historical triumph” (p. 22), respectively. This international presence of the ideology of nationalism and the success throughout its history is yet another reason why the study of the communicative role of national symbols is pertinent to the field of international communication. And while several of the nationalism theorists discussed here have made useful contributions to the study of nationalism, the ethno-symbolist approach as presented by Smith and the idea of banal nationalism as proposed by Billig have been chosen as the framework for the analysis of national symbols in this study.

Billig (1995) and Smith (2009) offer complimentary perspectives; as Billig concentrates on the seemingly ordinary everyday experience of nationalism through mindless reminders of nationhood, Smith examines the more emotionally charged ideological roots and motivations of nationalism based in ethno-symbolism. Since the selection of national symbols for this analysis includes symbols that are, both, displayed routinely and rooted in everyday life, as well as evoked during times of mobilization challenging the status quo, those two approaches prove useful.

In order to paint a fuller picture of the role national symbols played in Poland during the Soviet regime as well as during its demise, it is useful to expand on the intertwining ideological forces of nationalism and communism. Both showcased symbolic expressions of solidarity for their respective cause, with unintended

consequences at times that mostly played to the disadvantage of the Communist Party. The following section offers some examples.

Symbolic Representations of Nationalism and Communism

One of the bigger problems contributing to the fall of communism was the connection between communism and nationalism, which is a modernist notion built into the Soviet regime. Brown (2009) justly observes this notion, namely that “the Communist state, both by promoting the spread of education and by embedding national structures in its institutional framework from the 1922 constitution onwards, had sown the first seeds of its ultimate destruction” (p. 60). This also seems to diverge from Lenin’s misguided vision of a stateless society, although he was closer to the internationalization of communism than some of his followers, most notably Stalin. While the Communist Party was trying to “colonize” the past it had to rely on the trend in Polish history to see Germany as its main threat (the other trend posed the East as its main enemy), leading to the diminishing power of communist slogans. As a consequence, the Party relied more on nationalist rhetoric, which “could not be taken to its logical conclusion because then the dominant position of the Soviet Union would be called into question” (Koczanowicz, 2008, p. 80).

An example of the persistence of national and cultural identity in the case of Poland could be seen in the preservation of most national symbols during the communist rule. Kubik (1994) offers an insightful description and analysis of the meaning of symbols during the period 1976-81, including earlier and later events when pertinent. He investigates the relationship of the Solidarity culture with its political power, focusing “on the emergence, character, and social functions of the

symbolic/discursive polarization between the Party-state and the populace, as it was reflected in public ceremonies, demonstrations, and spectacles” (p. 5). As Kubik points out, the quest for legitimacy of the Communist regime was problematic due to an inherent constraint in its very nature:

Any regime must preserve its identity and adhere to its fundamental organizational principles if its survival in power is to have any meaning. A Communist regime, therefore, cannot construct its legitimacy by invoking electoral democracy or political pluralism without doing itself in” (p. 2, italics in original).

Thus, Polish Communists chose to partially remodel the national culture as a strategy to create their necessary legitimacy. The other solutions, to either impose “a totally new culture and the socialization of the populace to accept it” or to accept, or “appearing to accept, the existing (political) culture of the country” (Kubik, 1994, p. 3) were not feasible. The strategy to impose a completely new culture has been pursued unsuccessfully by other Eastern European states, and creating the impression of accepting the existing culture has not been pursued since it would have potentially lead to the regime’s collapse. The chosen solution to partially remodel the national culture was supposed to mean “socialist in form and national in content” (p. 3), but it became much more national overall than desired by the regime. Although neither the system nor the regime did foresee this consequence at the time, the notion of communism and nationalism functioning simultaneously has been pointed out by some scholars since then.

According to Mevius (2009), one of the views concerning the relationship between communism and nationalism has been presented as antagonistic and mutually exclusive. Additionally, nationalism has supposedly been oppressed prior to 1989 only

to come to light following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Mevius notes that these are popular myths and that

reality was different...The use of national images was not the exception, but the rule. From Cuba to Korea, all communist parties attempted to gain national legitimacy. This was not incidental or a deviation from Marxist orthodoxy, but ingrained in the theory and practice of the communist movement since its inception. (p. 377)

The protagonists themselves have perpetrated these myths. For the nationalists, the communists were not patriotic or “national” enough, given their ties to Moscow. The communists rejected that notion, but more importantly they insisted that communism is completely separate from nationalism, thus supporting the myth of polar opposites.

Mevius (2009) claims that the alleged blind spots in literature regarding the relationship between communism and nationalism can be attributed to “the intense fragmentation of the field in terms of chronological and geographical context and of subject matter” due to studies being limited to “specific countries and time periods.” Thus, “the comprehensive nature of communist appeals to national legitimacy remains hidden, and communist appeals to nationalism appear as novelty” (p. 381). He sees the fragmentation as a problem in general for other disciplines, but particularly when applied to communism. “This was a movement that existed continuously from 1848 to 1989, was international in organization and outlook, and from 1918 was dominated by the Comintern and the Soviet Union” (p. 391). Mevius expresses concern about this contextual blind spot regarding the communist ideology trying to reconcile with nationalism, but he’s hopeful that the new literature is presenting a trend in historiography that might prove redeeming in the future. This relationship between communism and nationalism was a necessary strategy for the preservation of legitimacy

of the communist regime. Reinforcing the image of unity through the appeal of belonging to a nation was crucial for the maintenance of the status quo and preventing social unrest due to a perceived lack of collective identity.

Although the regime “relied mostly on the tactic of gradually remodeling the national symbolic domain” (Kubik, 1994, p. 50), it left many loopholes for the expression of national identity that was not congruent with the Soviet image. Thus, the national and communist ideas existed simultaneously rather visibly through the display of symbols. As Kubik points out,

symbols, the most subtle and powerful regulators of thought and action, cannot be imposed by force, law, or administrative fiat. They usually arise and evolve spontaneously. Signs and emblems newly imposed by the authorities or collectively constructed do not become symbols until they are spontaneously accepted by those for whom they are created. (p. 50)

Hence the regime’s decision to gradually remodel the existing symbols without eradicating those that were not posing a direct threat or contradict the new Communist creed. Kubik (1994) summarizes some of the opposing forces that were present during that remodeling process:

Gierek’s regime made sure, through a series of constitutional, legal, and political changes, that the status quo political order was reinforced. It also intensified the propagation of Communist ideology. At the same time, however, it strove to improve the Polish self-image and cultivate national pride. Warsaw Castle became perhaps the major symbol of the new socialist patriotism, carefully separated from older forms of patriotism (now called nationalism), which were not sufficiently infused with socialist overtones. The new reality, which supposedly was “socialist in content and national in form,” was to be accepted, not discussed. (p. 51)

This point has also been made by Smith (2009), who argues that in order for elites to reach common ground with the rest of the population of a nation, the selected symbols, myths, memories, etc., need to resonate with members of that nation.

This is exactly what various early nationalist scholars—philologists, philosophers, lexicographers and historians—attempted to achieve in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. Contrary to those who claim that these traditions are ‘invented’, ethno-symbolists argue that only those symbolic elements that have some prior resonance among a large section of the population (and especially of its dominant *ethnie*) will be able to furnish the content of the proposed nation’s political culture. (p. 31)

As Poland’s economic situation kept worsening during the 1970s, Gierek’s miscalculated economic reform forced him to incorporate a patriotic emphasis during some of the later state ceremonies (e.g., the 35th anniversary of the Polish People’s Republic), instead of an internationalistic one, as a way of distraction. His was another significant contribution towards the beginning of the end. The power of symbols came into play here and challenged the regime’s perceived status quo of communication and reality:

The rejection of Gierek’s “master fiction” by large segments of the populace became possible only when the Church and the opposition developed their own counterhegemonic discourses and presented them publicly. By so doing they undermined the regime’s monopoly on social communication and furnished the people with conceptual symbolic tools to define the social reality afresh. (Kubik, p. 73)

Solidarity spread quickly and approximately 10 million people across Poland—one fourth of the country’s population—joined the trade union as members. This locally mobilized social movement that contributed to the demise of Soviet ideology received support from the Catholic Church in Poland, partially through the “free spaces” created by religious policy during communism. The removal of direct control of the authoritarian regime created those free spaces and allowed for the emergence of a catalyst that aided the construction of anti-regime political mobilization (Polletta, 1999).

The Polish Revolution

What is a revolution? According to Walzer, a contributor *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2005, edited by Honderich), it is

[a] radical political upheaval or transformation. Originally understood through an astronomical metaphor, revolutions were cyclical processes moving through four stages: tyranny, resistance, civil war, and restoration. In modern times, the term has shed that reference and come to designate a change in constitution, regime, and social order. The change is intentional and programmatic, undertaken on the basis of an ideological argument painting the old regime as tyrannical, corrupt, or oppressive, promising a new age, and justifying the (usually high) costs involved. (p. 817)

The Solidarity movement created a “new model of revolution—the new model of 1989, which replaces the old model of 1789” (Ash, 2009, p. 56), which was a historical event between nationalism and internationalism. The workers movement, also called the Polish Revolution (Ash, 2002), became the first free trade union in the Soviet bloc—the ironic use of Marxist-Leninist worker organizing against a system inspired by these doctrines. The events that took place during the social movement became “glocal” as everyone was watching Solidarity, representing the resurgence of Polish pride and defiance of Soviet ideology.

What makes Solidarity such an interesting case for the study of social movements and revolutions is the aforementioned new model of revolution, which does “not fit easily into any preconceived notion of revolutionary change in Europe” (Auer, 2004, p. 364). Solidarity adopted the model of “self-limiting revolution” that “had been conceived during the 1970s by Eastern European activists in the aftermath of two cataclysmic failures: the 1956 Hungarian uprising from below and the 1968 ‘Prague Spring,’ a paradigmatic (if ill-fated) instance of enlightened reform from above” (Wolin, 2005, p. 2). Those revolutions were crushed by tanks, courtesy of the Warsaw

Pact, thus the later need for an alternative strategy. This new alternative model was approached with a non-violent and non-ideological strategy. The leaders of the revolutions “appealed to a set of basic human values, assuming that a regime built on hypocrisy, greed and conformism could be defeated by truthfulness and a sense of basic human decency” (Auer, 2004, p. 265).

Solidarity’s success can be attributed, among other factors, to their exploitation of an ideological weakness of the communist system, since the “so-called workers’ states of Eastern Europe were unique in denying those same workers the basic rights to organize, a right they still enjoyed in the ‘capitalist West’” (Wolin, 2005, p. 2). Although the mass movement was stopped in its tracks by the martial law after about 16 months, the “developments in Poland in 1980-81 presented an ideological challenge” (Brown, 2009, p. 429). That ideological challenge, presented to the authoritarian regime not only by the workers, but by the collaborative effort of workers and intellectuals, created serious dents in the system and delivered its final blow when it regained its strength in 1989. At that point, there was no recovery possible for the gradually crumbling ideology.

One of the most important points in a social movement is the catalyst and the way people participating in the movement communicate and network the ideas leading up to the public voicing of the need for change. All revolutionary movements start out as communication—social change always starts out symbolically with an anti-thesis (e.g., essays, political tracts, street art, etc.)—this creates a hole in the space-time fabric.

The year 1989 has been carved into global memory as a year of significant change, haling the end of an ideology. What it meant for the different parties involved

still seems to diverge, as Stokes (2009) points out,

When communism collapsed, Americans felt they had won, whereas Russians, as Vladimir Putin has put it, saw it as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. For those in the rest of the world, the end of the cold war had another meaning: the end of old-fashioned colonialism. (p. 12)

In his treatise of postcommunism, Sakwa (1999) discusses several problems with Marx's idea of revolutionism and the revolutionary state. One of them that Marx "never resolved the problem of the state" and thus "his vision of commune democracy suggested a thoroughly decentralized self-managing model of politics, but how the economic life of the community would be run was left vague" (p. 13). The reason to point out this particular weakness in the demise of communist rule is because it played a pivotal role in Poland's wave of protests and underground movement initiatives, including the famous independent trade union Solidarity and its powerful symbols of change.

National Symbols

National symbols are a naturalized part of our everyday experience, but according to Geisler (2005), they are not natural, instead they constitute conventional signs. Geisler is asking what national symbols, such as anthems and flags "do to us" when they elicit an emotional response, which is relevant to the questions this study is trying to answer. He argues that "in most cases, the signifier of a national symbol involves *a historical reference shared by all members of the nation but not always easily accessible to foreigners*" and he claims that "this shared historical memory, condensed in the symbol, is not a natural bond but a conventional one. It needs to be renewed through constant rehearsal, lest its original meaning be lost" (pp. XVIII-XIX [emphasis added]). Geisler also mentions that the study of national symbols has not

received ample attention, namely that “most of the major historians and theorists of nationalism...were too preoccupied with debates about the definition, origins, and historical merits or demerits of nationalism to worry about the rhetoric of the symbolic realm” (p. XX).

As mentioned earlier, even though the study of national symbols has been expanding over the past few years, the focus of the present study on the communicative nature of national symbols and their role in social change adds a new dimension that will potentially have interdisciplinary ramifications.

In a recent study examining the role of national symbols and ceremonies in nation building, centered around national flags and national days, Elgenius (2011) gave some of the reasons why national symbols and ceremonies are important:

Nations become visible through their symbols (flags, anthems and emblems), ceremonies (national days, regional festivities, national holidays and international sporting events), museums and monuments (collections, memorials and statues), the land itself (the landscape and the capital city as a historical centre for institutions and location for ceremonials) and defined borders (passports, membership, citizenship, nationality, insiders and outsiders). (p. 2)

According to Elgenius, (2011) ”symbols and ceremonies mirror the pursuit of nations, the nation-ness becomes visible through these symbolic measures, and their acceptance provides a tangible measure of recognition—given from within and/or without” (p. 2). She proposes a temporal categorization of nation building that “can be understood in light of symbols and ceremonies appearing with reference to pre-modern (pre-1789), modern (*ca.* 1789-1914) and post-imperial (*ca.* 1914-) *symbolic regimes*” (p. 4, italics in original). Elgenius explains the temporal categorization and elaborates on the types of flags that were used in different time periods, corresponding to different symbolic regimes, respectively.

Pre-modern symbolism appears with religious or monarchical sanctioned communities. The Cross flags that survived to modern times were originally used in warfare whereas the national days with pre-modern origins, as a rule, were religious holidays later nationalized or transformed into national days. The national flags and national days that emerged during the modern symbolic regime honour revolutions, the signing of constitutions, the formation of unions and the declaration of independence as would be expected after 1789. The tricolour flags broke with earlier religious symbolism and appeared with secular ideals. Within the more recent post-imperial regime, established after 1914, nations display pre-modern heraldic devices or colours on their flags (heraldic flags) in order to justify the existence of the nation and the state in the present. Nationalists often wish to refer to an ancient past as a mechanism to sanction contemporary nations and/or states and it is *through such symbols that the past remains in the present* and tells us something about the importance of history in the making of nations. (pp. 4-5, italics in original)

This categorization is comparable to Smith's (2009) ethno-symbolist argument mentioned earlier regarding the pre-modern origins of nations. In his ethno-symbolic approach to the study of nations and nationalism, he points out that

many of the East European and Asian nations were created around pre-existing *ethnies* or ethnic networks, whether in Poland or Hungary, Slovakia or Finland, or on the basis of dominant *ethnies* in states such as Iran, Sri Lanka, Burma and Vietnam, and it was these ethnic ties that formed the basis of subsequent nations. (p. 44)

Smith (2009) asserts that the dominant *ethnies* have been responsible for providing these new national states "with their public cultures, their symbolic codes and repertoires, and many of their laws and customs" over time based on "pre-existing cultural and political ties" (p. 44), thus offering a counter-argument to the modern idea of nation forming.

Why do people and communities around the globe fight for and against symbols? Why does it matter if those symbols are categorized as national symbols, and what puts them in that category? Different symbolic universes, to use a term established by Berger and Luckmann (1966), that manifest themselves as sociological

communities, such as nations, have each their respective reality. The nation has been defined by Smith (2009), as “a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or ‘homelands’, create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardised laws” (p. 29). Once the status quo of the reality of a collective, in this case that of a nation, is challenged by an alternative symbolic system with an alternative reality, the sense of threat will activate mechanisms of protection of the status quo. Such mechanisms can take different forms of course, depending on the level of perceived or real threat. Berger and Luckmann (1966) provide some explanations and examples of how symbolic universes have operated in the past:

Historically, the problem of heresy has often been the first impetus for the systematic theoretical conceptualization of symbolic universes. The development of Christian theological thought as a result of a series of heretical challenges to the “official” tradition provides excellent historical illustrations for this process...For instance, the precise Christological formulations of the early church councils were necessitated not by the tradition itself but by the heretical challenges to it. As these formulations were elaborated, the tradition was maintained and expanded at the same time. Thus there emerged, among other innovations, a theoretical conception of the Trinity that was not only unnecessary but actually non-existent in the early Christian community. In other words, the symbolic universe is not only legitimated but also modified by the conceptual machineries constructed to ward off the challenge of heretical groups within a society. (p. 107)

Continuing that thought, they also accurately observed that “the appearance of an alternative symbolic universe poses a threat because its very existence demonstrates empirically that one’s own universe is less than inevitable” (p. 108). A prime example of this observation are the events that led to the demise of the Soviet empire. The Communist regime was unable to ward off the influence of the alternative symbolic

universe as represented by Solidarity, which has shown the Communist symbolic universe was more than evitable.

The confrontation of alternative symbolic universes implies a problem of power—which of the conflicting definitions of reality will be “made to stick” in the society. Two societies confronting each other with conflicting universes will both develop conceptual machineries designed to maintain their respective universes. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 109)

Methodology

As the main unit of analysis concerns national symbols, the author chose semiotic analysis as the method for this study. The selection of national symbols consists of the cross, the painting of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, and the National Stadium in Warsaw. Previous studies of national symbols have mostly focused on national flags, national days, and national anthems, in the context of nation forming and the construction of national identity. The reason for selecting symbols that are not typically covered by studies of national symbols is to broaden the understanding of what national symbols are and what actions they can motivate.

More specifically, the author chose the cross because it is one of the most dominant and ubiquitously present national symbols in Poland; it has unified and divided Poles throughout history, and its continuous presence in the private and public sphere is integral to understanding the Polish experience. The image of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa has also been a ubiquitous presence and is often times linked to the cross for the evident reason that both are religious symbols. Additionally, the significance of the Black Madonna is tied to a general admiration or cult of Mary that is tangible in Poland’s everyday culture. As a third symbol, the author chose the National Stadium because the complex history of this symbol within the built environment of the

capital city has a lot to say about social processes that manifest Polish national identity, but can also be applied to and explain other contexts of semiotic space. These three symbols are representative of the Polish culture and have been chosen with the purpose to explain the different processes of social change and transformation that will ideally offer valid interpretation models outside of that culture. These symbols will be first analyzed individually, and then situated within a larger semiotic landscape of nation and social change.

Semiotics has been described as a field, a science, a philosophy, and as a method, amongst other categorizations. This method is based on a highly interdisciplinary subject grounded in several schools of thought, which determine the methodological approach to studying particular signs in a particular sign system, which has been explored earlier in this study.

Specific semiotic modalities are addressed by such specialists as linguists, art historians and anthropologists, but we must turn to semioticians if we wish to study meaning-making and representation across modalities. Semiotics provides us with a potentially unifying conceptual framework and a set of methods and concepts for use across the full range of signifying practices, which include gesture, posture, dress, writing, speech, photography, the mass media and the Internet. (Chandler, 2002, p. 214)

In semiotics, when confronted with text, the researcher does not claim to write the one, correct interpretation once and for everybody. Semiotics is an analytic approach that should provoke further thinking; just like hermeneutics is never complete, in semiotics the conversation never ends. It is an empirical method, the text needs to be available to others, and it has to be sensory-based, which is the case in this study.

Semiotics is primarily a textual analysis, now also associated with cultural studies, that as a method “seeks to analyse texts as structured wholes and investigates

latent, connotative meanings” (Chandler, 2002, p. 8). The chosen approach for this study will mainly draw from Eco and to some extent from Barthes. Since the author does not align herself entirely with neither the Peircean nor the structuralist traditions, an approach that bridges those two seems to be the best fit for the choice of methodology. Eco has been acting as one of those bridges, as he attempted to “combine the structuralist perspective of Hjelmsef with the cognitive-interpretive semiotics of Peirce” (Eco, 1999, p. 251).

Given that the units of analysis are national symbols and considering the role conventions play in the meaning and understanding of symbols, Eco’s concept of codes and the fact that “cultural convention is the basic criterion of his definitions” (Nöth, 1995, p. 211) of those codes makes his approach compatible with the purpose of this study. Eco talks about the semiotic field as a “metaphor for the plurality of codes which are possible subjects of semiotic research” (Nöth, 1995, p. 212). Codes are systems of signs and while “Eco suggested that it is not true that a code organizes signs but rather it is more correct to say that codes provide the rules that generate the signs” (Moriarty, 2005, p. 235, referring to Eco’s *A Theory of Semiotics*).

In view of the definitions and theories of symbols as well as the semiotic context of consciousness structures derived from the theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation, codes in the semiotic field will be a useful for the interpretation and a better understanding of the role of national symbols in social change. Nöth (1995) makes the following observation regarding Eco’s semiotic thresholds:

While events of natural semiosis remain unaffected by cultural conventions, their interpretation changes with time and culture. Even that mode of interpretation which comes closest to the reality of the facts of natural semiosis, namely, scientific explanation, is still affected by culture, as the changes in the

world models of physics show. In archaic times, for example, lightning was once understood as the gesture of a supernatural being. Modern meteorology explains it as an electrical phenomenon. *These two modes of explanation exemplify the shift from a mythic code to a scientific code as the basis of the interpretation of natural semiosis.* (pp. 213-214, [emphasis added])

Another important concept for the analysis of national symbols is the idea of binary oppositions, which ties into identity.

Structuralists emphasize the importance of relations of paradigmatic opposition. Largely through the influence of Jakobson, the primary analytical method employed by many structuralist semioticians involves the identification of binary or polar semantic oppositions (e.g. us-them, public-private) in texts or signifying practices. Such a quest is based on a form of ‘dualism’. Dualism seems to be deeply rooted in the development of human categorization. (Chandler, 2002, p. 101)

In order to understand what makes symbols so powerful and why they matter in questions of identity, the semiotic principle of difference needs to be mentioned again. The principle of difference is a necessary condition for identity. For instance, being Polish is different from being German, and is different from being Russian. We identify others as what they are and as what they are not. Chandler (2002) notes, “while for Saussure the meaning of signs derives from how they *differ* from each other, Derrida coined the term *différance* to allude also to the way in which meaning is endlessly *deferred*” (p. 75).

Interpretation and meaning are critical concepts for understanding human behavior and symbols are a prime example of carriers or containers of meaning that require interpretation in order to make sense of the world we live in. As communication scholars, and social scientists in general, we attempt to reach meaningful conclusions and to some of us the “logical extension of the understanding of reality” can be expressed this way:

If it is the case that people live in a social world rather than a natural one and if they perceive what occurs through their own understanding of reality, then researchers are no more able to directly observe reality than is anyone else.

(Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 36, italics in original)

As symbol, interpretation, and meaning are intertwined concepts, the author attempts an analysis of symbols that are tied to Polish nationality and have played important roles in initiating and sustaining the revolutionary movement of Solidarity through an interpretation of the semiotic field of codes. The analysis also includes the symbolic character of collective memory and the way it motivates and mobilizes masses by evoking passion and emotionally binding people to challenge the status quo.

Discussion

The Catholic Church and the Nation under the Cross

When Zubrzycki (2006) describes the genealogy of Polish nationalism, she points out that “every nation has its myth of foundation” and although those myths change over time, they stay and as such are timeless in that sense, “and only that sense” (p. 34).

The most common and pervasive Polish myth is that of Poland’s intrinsic Catholicity: *Polonia semper fidelis* (Poland always faithful), the bulwark of Christendom defending Europe against the infidel (however defined); the Christ of nations, martyred for the sins of the world, resurrected for the world’s salvation; a nation whose identity is conserved and guarded by its defender, the Roman Catholic Church, and shielded by its Queen, the miraculous Black Madonna, Our Lady of Częstochowa; a nation that has given the world a pope and rid the Western world of Communism... If this representation is a caricature of the myth, it is, like all caricatures, distorted only by the picture’s being drawn with rather oversharpe angles. (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 34)

Before discussing the symbolism of the Black Madonna, which, just like the national hero Pope John Paul II plays a crucial role in Poland’s religious identity, the focus will

be on the Catholic Church and how its role elevated the cross to a national symbol. The role of the Catholic Church in Polish society is a result of three historical events:

the baptism of Duke Mieszko I in 966; the close identification of the church with Polish nationalism during the partitions, occupations, and externally imposed governments of the past two centuries; and the creation of a nearly homogenous Catholic nation through the murder and expulsion of Jews and through the ethnic migrations resulting from Stalin's movement of the Polish state westward in the late 1940s. (Byrnes, 2001, p. 30)

Consequently, the majority of Poland's population has been and still is Roman Catholic.

Morawska (1987) claimed that it was Catholicism that played a major role in defining the nation, whereas Osa (1989) advised caution regarding such claims, noting that "[t]he components of association between Catholicism and Polish nationalism have gone through as many permutations as have the boundaries of Poland" (p. 277).

Between 1795 and 1918, which marked the time period of the partitions, the church was crucial for Poland's survival as a nation, but its support for Poland's independence was hindered by the Vatican's own institutional interests (Byrnes, 2001). This argument has been strongly supported by Porter (2011), who based his claim that the church did not always support Poland's political goals on an impressive amount of archival research. According to the documents he studied, Polish national identity has not always been as strongly associated with the Catholic Church as it has been assumed. Interestingly, the perpetuated myth of the church's alleged support of Poland's political ambitions from the beginning of the nation's existence seems to have solidified the identification of Polishness and Catholicism.

The support returned during the Second World War when both the Polish people and the Catholic clergy suffered; many bishops and priests were murdered during the Nazi occupation. Furthermore, "in addition to limiting and controlling the clergy, the

state attempted to rewrite history books to play down the role of the Church in Poland's history" (Juergensmeyer, 1993, p. 136). One member of the clergy who was among the survivors, Stefan Wyszyński, became a national hero following the war. He was the "chaplain to the wartime underground and future primate of Poland" and he associated the church "with resistance to Nazi rule and in time with the revived Polish nationalism that followed" (Byrnes, 2001, p. 31). He has been quoted as proclaiming, "Next to God, our first love is Poland" (as cited in Byrnes, 2001, p. 31).

The Catholic Church played an even greater role during the communist regime, openly supporting the opposition movement. Byrnes (2001) described that role as

firmly concrete, in that the church offered the nation everything from free space for the exploration of Polish history and culture to meeting halls and communication equipment necessary for political mobilization. Yet the *church's political role was also deeply symbolic, in that it served as a living exemplar of independence and what many Poles called authenticity.* (pp. 31-32 [emphasis added])

When Karol Wojtyła became Pope John Paul II in 1978, the Polish Church gained political importance once more and his first visit to Poland as pope in 1979 made a great dent in the regime's confidence and power. The day of the pope's visit marked one of the greatest moments in Poland's history and the "historical and mythological justification could not be better: on 8 May 1979, Catholic Poland was to celebrate the nine-hundredth anniversary of Saint Stanisław's martyrdom, Wojtyła's predecessor to the Kraków bishopric" (Kubik, 1994, p. 129). Saint Stanisław is one of the two patron saints (in addition to Mother of God) of Poland; he "has been proclaimed as the patron of Poland on 8 September 1253" (Kubik, 1994, p. 130). Here the historical layers and connections are an important part of the myth-making. Because symbols are rooted in history, the more history they have, the less likely they become dissociated and

arbitrary, the more they are embedded in a magic-mythic consciousness. The number of “holy” men that is presented here in succession, as well as the of the holy woman personified by the Black Madonna, creates a strong bond between the sacred beings and their ties to the Polish nation. There seems to be a sense of immediacy, a connection between the “chosen” people and the fact that they are Polish, such as Saint Stanisław and Pope John Paul II, who has been canonized on April 27th, 2014, thus joining the ranks and confirming the myth. To the religious, magic-mythic person this is not a coincidence, it is not arbitrary.

The symbolic manipulation of the Polish people that took place during the preparations for the pope’s visit was not successful, despite the authorities’ elaborate attempt to limit the population’s access and exposure to the pope’s speech as well as trying to place the pope’s visit in the context of the republic’s thirty-fifth anniversary, thus avoiding the association with the Saint Stanisław myth. The message of the myth, “that secular power should be counterbalanced by ecclesiastical authority—was unacceptable to the Communist regime” (Kubik, 1994, p. 135). The reason why this was unacceptable to the communists is because the communist worldview is more modern and dissociated, and having any kind of entity, such as an ecclesiastical authority, being part of the decision-making apparatus would challenge their worldview and potentially their undermine their political power. When political power is being shared by representatives with different consciousness structures, there is more potential for conflict of interpretation and confrontations over who decides what things mean. This is the politics of symbology, whoever is in power has the ability to determine what is real, which refers back the idea of privileged realities as mentioned earlier. This

conflict transcends geopolitical borders and is the reason why many governments insist on separating church and state.

Apart from being on a symbolically significant date, the use of space provided a symbolic importance of its own: “The altar for the first pontifical mass held in Warsaw that day was erected in the middle of Victory Square (a site hitherto used only for state ceremonies) and was seen on TV throughout the whole country” (Kubik, 1994, p. 139). It led to a symbolic reclaiming of a public place by the Polish people, even if for a short moment. The event where the binary opposition between public versus private, and “theirs” versus “ours”, as well as the temporary blurring of lines in a semiotic landscape manifesting themselves during the pope’s visit, has been referred to as a second baptism for Poland. Planting a religious structure, such as an altar, in the center of a space claimed by an opposite ideology, a place named Victory Square, nonetheless, signified one of many events that chipped away at the legitimacy of the communist regime.

According to Kubik (1994), the Viennese Cardinal König called the event a “psychological earthquake” and numerous observers “described the social consequence of the visit as a *catharsis*” (p. 139, italics in original). Kubik quoted a comment from an independent observer, a Polish author, which serves as an excellent example that demonstrates the concepts of collective effervescence and the emotional appeal of symbols that evokes passion and signifies the binding power of those symbols that reach to the roots of a national identity:

The emotions of the crowds welcoming the pope can hardly be compared with those of the crowd officially organized to march in the May Day parade. The long-term impact of the pope’s visit on the collective imagination can prove, however, to be even more significant: no doubt it will move the deepest layers of national consciousness...It should be remembered that symbols which

organize national consciousness stimulate activities whose results are quite tangible. (as cited in Kubik, pp. 139-140)

The pope's first visit in Poland lasted nine days and can be characterized as transformational. Those days were accompanied by an array of symbolic expressions of national consciousness and possibilities of renewal, provided by a glimpse of an alternative symbolic universe. According to Kubik's (1994) assessment, "the operative efficacy of the visit was created when the pope presented to the people a counterhegemonic model of sociopolitical reality firmly embedded in a religious worldview" (p. 149), thus catering to and strengthening the chosen identity of a religious community. Here, again, is a contestation of the legitimacy of realities by a religious figure. Religious symbols gained importance in the eighties, when Catholicism took on the role of a "civic religion" of sorts, "and its symbols and ethical teachings were generally accepted even by people who held opposed metaphysical beliefs" (Koczanowicz, 2008, p. 101). The fact that Catholicism transcended metaphysical beliefs speaks to the binding power of *religio* (Kramer, 2012) and the emotional identification it provided at a time when the need for standing together in solidarity was crucial for the gradual and self-limiting revolution leading to social change.

According to Smith (1991), "religious communities are often closely related to ethnic identities" (p. 6), which, among many ethnic communities such as Catholics in Poland, can translate to an identity "based on religious criteria of differentiation" (p. 7). In the case of Poland, the choice of Catholicism over Protestantism and Orthodoxy was mainly based on the desire to establish an identity, in opposition to the two main threats

to Poland's sovereignty and independence. Those two nations, Germany and Russia, can be described as the other. Semiotic icons and symbols have been manufactured and used to control identity in part by defying the purposeful and accidental encroachment of the other.

Modern Polish national identity by the end of the century was being constituted and reconstituted through the opposition to 'Others': Protestant Germans in the west and Orthodox Russians in the east. The initial impetus for this oppositional identity was thus rooted in cultural and political geography, though it was reinforced through colonial domination by these 'external Others' and exploited as such by Polish nation-builders. (Zubrzycki, 2006, pp. 54-55)

It was the proximity of the other and the era of European romanticism that inspired the image of the crucified nation with Poland as the martyr on the cross. That image has been made popular by the patriotic Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). Among many poetic achievements, including the epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*, "regarded by some literary historians as the finest jewel in Polish literature" (Davies, 2008, p. 6), Mickiewicz wrote a political tract *The Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrimage* that he dedicated to the idea of freedom for Poland. The following is an excerpt from a fable included in *The Books*:

...in idolatrous Europe there rose three rulers; the name of the first was *Fredrick the Second* of Prussia, the name of the second was *Catherine the Second* of Russia, the name of the third was *Theresa* of Austria...And this was a satanic trinity, contrary to the Divine Trinity, and was in the manner of a mock and a derision of all that is...But the Polish Nation alone did not bow down to the new idol...And finally, Poland said: "Whosoever will come to me shall be free and equal, for I am FREEDOM...the Kings when they heard of this were terrified in their hearts, and said..."Come, let us slay this nation"...And they martyred the Polish Nation, and laid in its grace, and the kings cried out "We have slain and buried Freedom"...the Polish Nation did not die...on the third day the soul shall return to the body, and the Nation shall rise, and free all the peoples of Europe from slavery. And already two days have gone by. One day ended with the first capture of Warsaw, and the second day ended with the second capture of Warsaw, and the third day shall begin, but shall not end. And as after the resurrection of Christ blood sacrifices ceased in all the world, so after the

resurrection of the Polish Nation wars shall cease in all Christendom.
(Mickiewicz, as cited in Noyes, 1944, pp. 376-380)

The poet alluded to the partitions by Prussia, Austria and Russia, who “in their decision to devour their neighbour, the adjacent rulers only acted as arrogant leaders usually act when they possess the means to aggrandize themselves and when historical circumstances provide the opportunity” (Davies, 2008, p. 6). Although Mickiewicz, the “poet-apostle of Polish nationalism” (p. 8) was born after his country disappeared from the political map and never got to know it as a country, his patriotic spirit seemed even stronger for it. His emotional identification can be mostly explained through his primarily magic worldview, which is reflected in his prose as well as poetry. Interestingly, his symbolic code has allowed him to imagine a country he never knew through the romanticized idea of a signified nation. And he obviously wasn’t the only one.

Polish mythology holds that Polish nation, repeatedly crucified on the cross of partition and occupation, will one day rise again at the center of Europe to serve as both an example to, and a redeemer of, the rest of the continent. Nourished by the example of Jan Sobieski, the Polish king who defended Vienna (and thus European civilization) from the Turks in the seventeenth century, the national myth holds the Polish nation up as the “bulwark of western Christianity,” the foundation of the church’s age-old struggle with both secularists and other religions. (Byrnes, 2001, pp. 34-35)

The messianic interpretation of Polish destiny as the Christ of the nations has also found its symbolic expression in Mickiewicz’s poetry, such as his poetic drama *Dziady* or *Forefathers’ Eve*. Here is an excerpt from Part III:

I see my nation bound, all Europe drags him on
And mocks him:
“To the judgment hall!” – The multitude leads in the
guiltless man.
Mouths, without hearts or hands, are judges here,
And all shout, “Gaul—Let Gaul be judge!”

Gaul found no fault in him—and washed his hands;
 And yet the kings shout, “Judge him! Punish him!
 His blood shall be on us and on our children;
 Crucify Mary’s son and loose Barabbas!
 He scorneth Caesar’s crown: crucify him,
 Or we will say, thou art not Caesar’s friend.”
 And Gaul delivered him unto the people—
 They led him forth—and then this innocent head
 Grew bloodstained from the mocking crown of thorns;
 They raised him up in sight of all the world—
 The people thronged to see—and Gaul cried out,
 “Behold the free and independent nation!”

I see the cross.— O Lord, how long, how long
 Must he still bear it? Lord, be merciful!
 Strengthen thy servant lest he fall and die!
 The cross has arms that shadow all of Europe,
 Made of three withered peoples, like dead trees.
 Now is my nation on the martyr’s throne.
 He speaks and says, “I thirst,” and Rakus gives him
 To drink of vinegar, and Borus, fall,
 While Mother Freedom stands below and weeps.
 And now a soldier hired in Muscovy
 Comes forward with his pike and pierces him,
 And from my guiltless nation blood has gushed,
 What hast thou done, most stupid myrmidon,
 Most heartless! Yet he only shall repent—
 And God will pardon him his sins at last.

O my beloved! He droops his dying head
 And now in a loud voice he calls, “My God,
 My God, and why hast thou forsaken me?”
 And he is dead.

(as cited in Noyes, 1944, pp. 292-293)

As Davies notes, the lines from the *Forefathers’ Eve*, Part III present an extended metaphor and a figurative personification of the historical events, where “France (Gaul) plays the part of Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator who complied with judicial murder and washed his hands of innocent blood; the crucifiers...are Prussia, Russia and Austria” who “divided the spoils not unlike the Roman soldiers who cast lots for the garments of Jesus at the foot of the cross” (p. 10). He also adds that Mickiewicz

conflated France's role with the immolation of 1831, "when, so to speak, Poland was crucified afresh" (p. 10). This is very much an example of mythic communication, which was characteristic of Romanticism. Mickiewicz was not the only literary figure who applied the Christ analogy as a poetic device when talking about the Polish nation, but he was the most prominent one. Until this day, the *Polish Idea* is signified through Mickiewicz's works. His poetry included some elements representative of a mythic consciousness that Davies points out: "'Now my soul is incarnate in my country,' declared the hero in *Forefathers' Eve*, 'My body has swallowed her soul, and I and my country are one'" (as cited in Davies, 2008, p. 12). Such imagery of presenting a country as one with an individual, thus alluding to an association with the sign, is a good example of using mythic consciousness to emphasize the importance of emotional identification

The symbolic expressions of romantic nationalism offered solace to a battered nation that was subjected to the Russian rule at the time. Elevating one's nation to a pure figure such as Christ, and seeing that Christ-like nation as the future redeemer and savior of other nations from oppression, and assuming the role of a martyr and a hero that will bring down the evil empires, are all part of a mythical consciousness.

The Polish nation was not ethnically homogenous before World War II; during the Romantic era "to be Polish had to do primarily with spiritual loyalties, with invisible rather than visible ties. A Pole was someone who felt himself to be a Pole" and yet "the nationalist who thus exalted the Poland of the spirit also promoted the veneration of the Polish language, preparing the way for a more linguistic and eventually more ethnic understanding of Polishness". Thus, "with the emergence of more intolerant political

movements, a harsh and racially tinged nationalism scornful of romantic and religious values was destined to arise” (Davies, 2008, p. 14). After World War II, while colonized by the Soviet system, some of the romantic sentiments returned, as well as did the religious values. They never entirely disappeared, but the aftermath of the war and the subjugation to a totalitarian regime proved to be a fertile ground for those values once again, thus validating the argument the theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation makes about different consciousness structures being more efficient than others at different times of need. In this case, the magic-mythic structure seemed more efficient as survival and endurance tactic.

After the fall communism, the role of the church developed a different dynamic. It had its own agenda and one of the church’s advantages was that in the early 1990s it was “the most organized and most coherent institutional presence in a rather chaotic political environment” (Byrnes, 2001, p. 33). Those who became supportive of the church and perceived the possibility of continuous collaborative efforts to counteract the Soviet empire and build a new Poland, including Michnik (1993), became disillusioned when the collaboration dissipated and political agendas took over. Despite some conflicts of interest, the church has remained an important part in Polish society. However, as the time of crisis has passed, the role of the church has changed and although still an important cultural institution, its influence has weakened. But the presence of the cross as a national symbol, a unifying and dividing one at times, has remained strong as can be seen in the following discussion revolving around cross controversies in the more recent past.

An example of a contested symbolic landscape that has been characterized as a framework for competing national memories is Auschwitz/Oświęcim. Both Jews and Poles have been claiming the site as symbolizing their memory of tragedy. Outhwaite and Ray (2005) reference Kapralski (2001), who “argues that for Jews, Auschwitz symbolizes the Holocaust, the event that condensed a history of anti-Semitic persecutions, and therefore is a symbol of Jewish uniqueness in the face of annihilation” and for the Poles, “Auschwitz symbolizes the Polish tragedy during World War II, which was a condensed history of German attempts to subordinate and eventually destroy the Polish nation” (Outhwaite & Ray, 2005, p. 185). The Jews expressed their need for rhetorical ownership of the symbol in order to received acknowledgment of anti-Semitic persecutions that have been downplayed during the communist period. “Polish nationalists”, on the other hand, tried to justify their need for rhetorical ownership of the symbol as an opportunity to “redefine identity via the memory of Auschwitz—as a solely ‘Polish’ place and a national-religious symbol” (p. 186).

The conflict over competing national memories escalated when in 1984 Carmelite nuns established a convent in Auschwitz, overlooking the camp site and decided to erect 100 crosses within the boundaries of the camp. Following protests from Jewish groups, an agreement between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and European Jewish Leaders has been reached and ratified in Geneva in 1987, asking the nuns to move their convent from Auschwitz by 1989. The move did not happen and a visit by a Rabbi with a group of Jews from New York lead to another clash at the site when the Rabbi staged a protest, which eventually culminated in confrontation with Pope John Paul II, leaving the pope perplexed and the local Jewish

community apologizing for the Rabbi. The protest took place in July 1989, “roughly coinciding with the fall of Communism in Poland. Many Poles perceived the pressures from outside Poland to relocate the convent as an insult and a threat to, or even an assault on, their state’s newly regained and still fragile sovereignty” (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 6). The nuns eventually relocated in 1993 after the pope’s personal intervention. A year before the 1989 cross controversy,

a tall cross appeared on the ground of the convent, the so-called gravel pit. Brought there by a local priest and a group of former (Polish Catholic) Auschwitz prisoners, the cross had been part of an altar on the grounds of Birkenau, Auschwitz’s sister camp three kilometers away, where John Paul II celebrated Mass in 1979 during his historic visit to Poland as pontiff—hence its popular naming as the papal cross. (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 7)

The cross had been stored in a basement for almost a decade, before being erected in the convent’s yard, without witnesses and without any kind of public ceremony. The label “papal” cross had been contested by Father Musiał since there was no proof of the pontiff actually blessing the cross or establishing the gravel pit as the adequate site for the cross (Zubrzycki, 2006). Since the label has been used in public discourse, I will follow Zubrzycki’s lead and use it as well, omitting the quotation marks from this point forward while reserving the status of contestation.

The cross controversy culminated in a third incident, taking place in February 1998, when “Krzysztof Śliwiński, plenipotentiary to the foreign affairs minister and responsible for contacts with the Jewish Diaspora, mentioned in an interview...that the papal cross...would also be removed from the grounds of the former Carmelite convent” (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 8). This statement elicited strong reactions from several political figures, including Lech Wałęsa, who insisted that the cross shall not be removed. The issue gained national attention, leading up to a hunger strike by Kazimierz Świtoń, who

used to be a Solidarity activist as well as deputy from the “right-wing Confederation for an Independent Poland” (p. 9). The strike lasted forty-two days, staged at the gravel pit. When the Roman Catholic Church did not commit to his demands to leaving the cross where it was, he instigated the planting of 152 crosses by fellow Poles, “both to commemorate the (documented) deaths of 152 ethnic Poles executed by that specific site by Nazis in 1941 and to ‘protect and defend the papal cross’” (p. 10). His appeal was successful and the symbolism not only mobilized Poles from all over the country, as well as fellow “defenders of the cross” from the United States, Canada, and Australia, to plant those 152 crosses. The appeal exceeded Świtoń’s expectations when over the course of several months the number of crosses rose to 332 in May 1999; at that point the Polish army intervened and removed them.

Here, once again, a semiotic landscape has been transformed by juxtaposing competing symbols of national memory. In a short amount of time,

religious images of the national Madonna (Our Lady of Częstochowa), as well as secular symbols such as red-and-white Polish flags and national coats of arms featuring a crowned white eagle, commonly adorned the crosses and added to their symbolic weight and complexity. (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 10)

Disobedience of Catholics of the episcopate has manifested itself in masses held at camp site, surrounded by crosses (see Figure 1). The “war of crosses” put the government in a strange situation regarding the expectations of its involvement. Based on the concordat of 1997, the government initially insisted on the separation of church and state and assigning the responsibility to the Roman Catholic Church since the papal cross was its property. The church, on the other hand, argued that the crosses were planted on government property “and that the church had no monopoly on the



Figure 1. Mass celebrated outside the gravel pit in September 1998. Photo: PAP/Roman Koszowski

symbol of the cross, which belonged to the entire community of believers” (p. 13).

Eventually, following many debated and legal battles, a solution was reached to remove the crosses and evict Świtoń from the gravel pit. All of the crosses were removed, except for the papal cross (Figure 2) since there was “no resolution of the *initial* conflict concerning the presence of that specific cross” (p. 14).



Figure 2. Papal cross in Auschwitz. Photo: Signalhead

In the end, the papal cross has become a symbol of the tensions surrounding the conflict between competing national memories, signifying a monument of dispute. As Zubrzycki (2006) notes, the papal cross now serves as

a reminder of the conflict, a scar on the ground, a polluting emblem in a taboo zone—the protection zone around the former camp, a legal and symbolic buffer between the sacred and the profane, between Auschwitz and the town of Oświęcim (p. 14).

The cross as a mythic symbol is powerful, both literally and figuratively, because, to the linguistic community that shares the understanding of the code of Polishness and

Catholicism, it is not an arbitrary symbol. Although it does fall into the magic spectrum, the association of the cross with the martyred nation that was put on the cross, just like Christ, is a powerful enough myth to stir emotions and cause controversy.

The time of the controversy played important role in the interpretation and reinterpretation of the Polish nation as a martyr. Since the incidents took place post 1989 and Poland was free from the colonizing power of the Soviet system, “‘Oświęcim,’ the symbol of Polish martyrdom, was overshadowed by ‘Auschwitz,’ the international epicenter of Holocaust memory-making” (p. 16). So, in addition to the controversy being a clash between representatives of two groups whose martyr identities are tied to the “messianic myths of chosenness” (p. 16), the events were also indicative of idea and interpretation of the Polish nation in a post-communist context and its relations with the Catholic Church (Zubrzycki, 2006).

A triadic relationship between state, nation, and religion, per Zubrzycki’s (2006) suggestion, does seem to be a stable construct, which has been exemplified once more during a contention involving yet another cross following the crash of the presidential plane on April 10th, 2010 in Smolensk, western Russia. The plane crash killed 96 dignitaries, including the Polish president Lech Kaczyński and his wife, who were aboard the Polish Air Force TU-154. The symbolism of the crash and the aftermath is multi-faceted (fig. 3). The victims were en route to a ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre, where more than 22,000 Poles were killed through a shot in the back of the head by the Soviet secret police in 1940.

Although conspiracy theories still persist regarding the cause of the crash, especially with the new developments Ukraine and Russia following the re-annexation of the historically contested Crimea, the investigation has concluded that it was an error committed by the Polish pilots as well as the Russian air traffic controllers during the landing procedure in dense fog. The conspiracy theories are not surprising given the emotionally charged context of the crash. In a scenario where members of the Polish elite are being killed in Smolensk, Russia, while on their way to commemorate another group of Polish elite members who were mass executed 70 years prior, in Katyń, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) west of Smolensk, the nationalist russophobe mind is being fed the continuous idea of the persecuted nation. The aftermath of the crash, in addition to the disputed process of investigation, has once more sedimented Poland's identity in opposition to their historic other, Russia. The reaction was not uniform and the conspiracy theories are mostly supported by the more conservative part of Poland's population, but that part is large enough to keep the debate alive.

Regardless of the cause for the tragedy, it still is a national tragedy that has been memorialized with a lot of patriotic pathos. The first memorial service took place in the forest of Smolensk (called the "forest of death") and presented a powerful image of an unintended double commemoration, with rows of empty chairs, a small Polish flag and an umbrella hung on each of the empty chairs that were meant for the guests of honor who never arrived (fig. 3). If one were to take the conspiracy theories further, mythologizing the experience of the tragedy that goes along with this image, it might imply that those chairs were meant to remain empty. Emotional responses to national tragedies at times include looking for an explanation to understand the meaning of what

happened. When a national tragedy happens to a nation that has a long history of persecution and that has developed its identity through those memories, some of them more mythologized than others, a mythic consciousness might offer solace but it also can lead to hermeneutic horizon with no way out. Mythic consciousness can help to survive a tragedy, it can motivate and mobilize a collective toward social change, but it can also cause harm when powerful symbols are used for nationalistic purposes.



Figure 3. Memorial service after plane crash in Smolensk. Photo: Grzegorz Jakubowski/European Pressphoto Agency

The tragedy has unfortunately invited some nationalist responses that have been fueled by the conspiracy theories, as Katyn is a deep wound in Poland's memory. During the Communist era, Katyn was not supposed to be mentioned in public because at that time the official Soviet version of the massacre was that the Nazis were the perpetrators. Hence, the wound has been festering for decades and it found a partial

outlet after the tragedy happened. The nationalist discourse led by the late president's supporters was sparked by right wing-politicians and by the deceased president's twin brother Jarosław Kaczyński. The discourse referred to the plane crash as a "second Katyn" and the country was divided in those who believed that it was an accident and those who were convinced it was an assassination (Domoslawski, November 2013). The paranoia embedded in the conspiracy theories resulted in Poland's liberal intelligentsia coining the term "Smolensk religion". According to Polish journalist Domoslawski (November 2013), the doctrine of the "Smolensk religion" was "a singular, explosive mixture of Polish messianism and religious fundamentalism, xenophobia and a love of martyrdom. For followers of the faith, any rational argument about the crash was instantly transubstantiated into further proof of the assassins' cunning" (para 8). Critics of this type of nationalist discourse in Poland take examples such as the "Smolensk religion" to be Poland's problem with the idea of a modern outlook and liberal democracy, which has been embraced much more willingly when the government changed hands after the plane crash in 2010.

To return to the discussion of the cross as a Polish national symbol, the more recent "cross controversy" took place in front of the presidential palace in Warsaw (Fig. 4). After the crash, supporters of the late president have decorated the space in front of the palace with various items, including images of Pope John Paul II, Our Lady of Częstochowa as well other religious symbols, and a four meter or 13 feet high cross, making it into a shrine for the deceased (Deboick, 2010; Dempsey, 2010). The author of this study has been visiting her relatives in Wrocław, Poland, at the time of the cross controversy. On the day when the cross was supposed to be removed by authorities to

St. Anne's, a church nearby, and the removal was nationally broadcast, live, the self-proclaimed "Defenders of the Cross" were staging a protest that prevented the removal of the cross that day. The live broadcast was eventually cancelled and debates intensified.



Figure 4. Cross and memorabilia in front of Presidential Palace in Warsaw. Photo: Tomasz Gzell/European Pressphoto Agency

For about a month, the Defenders of the Cross were holding a vigil around the cross to prevent another removal attempt. However, the position held by the Defenders of the Cross was not representative of the majority of Poles. Another group, Akcja Krzyż (Cross Action), emerged and actively engaged in an effort to remove the cross. This group consisted of mostly young liberal-minded atheists and secularists who opposed the display of a religious symbol in front of the seat of the government. An

interesting shift has been occurring within Poland post 1989. As the event of the 2010 cross controversy shows, in “the equating of Katyn and Smolensk, historical specificity is erased to make universal symbols of Polish suffering, and at this shrine Catholicism was articulated as the essence of Poland's history and nationhood”, but a growing number of liberal secularists, particularly among the younger Poles is distancing themselves from religious forms of nationalism (Deboick, 2010). What that means for other forms of nationalism remains to be seen.

Adopting Zubrzycki’s perspective, which was influenced by Sewell (1999) and his view of cultures, the author of this study thinks of culture “as a network of semiotic relations that has a certain coherence” and agrees that

[t]his coherence...is “thin” at best: users of culture form a semiotic community in that they recognize the meaning of signs and symbols and are able to engage in meaningful action, but without necessarily agreeing in their emotional or moral evaluations of these recognized symbols. (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 26)

This perspective moves away from a more static system of symbols and meanings and lends itself for the study of nationalism, especially when the idea of a nation is considered a work in progress, an idea to which both Billig (1995) and Zubrzycki (2006) subscribe. Relating back to the semiotic spectrum of the cross, “all Poles, regardless of religious affiliation and level of commitment, recognize the cross as a key Polish symbol; not all, however, agree on its meaning and place in Polish society” (Zubrzycki, 2006, pp. 26-27). This author’s emphasis on the mobilizing power of emotions is also part of Zubrzycki’s approach to interpreting the symbolism of the cross: “As a Christian symbol, the cross summons sentiments related to suffering and

martyrdom, but also of hope and renewal,” furthermore, “in its more specifically national dimension, it arouses feelings of pride in Polish national identity and independence—conjoining connotations of both the oppression from, and resistance to, foreigners” (p. 28).

Both controversies, although more than a decade apart, show parallels in symbolic expressions of identity and in both cases binary oppositions are in place. The semiotic landscape signified as “Polish,” claimed by Poles versus “non-Poles” (Jews); “real Poles” (Deboick, 2010) versus “un-faithful” Poles (atheists and secularists); Defenders of the Cross who “sacralized” the camp site/memorial versus those who insisted on the “profane” removal of the cross. In both cases of polarization it was the “Other” from within, which is an indication of the power of the mythic cross and its stable position as a national symbol in Poland.

The Cult of the Black Madonna

The Black Madonna’s role as a national symbol has briefly been mentioned in the discussion of Poland’s mythic designation as the Christ of nations. Images of the Black Madonna can be found around the world, in different manifestations. In Poland, the Częstochowa rendition is only one of hundreds of icons of the Madonna displayed in different regions of the country. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2007) studied the different traditions and transformations of the Black Madonna in Latin America and Europe and described the “migration” of Madonna sanctuaries to the United States.

When Poles emigrated to distant lands, they took the Madonna with them and often established new sanctuaries, such as the Black Madonna of Częstochowa Shrine and Grottos in Eureka, Missouri; in Doylestown, Pennsylvania; and in Czystochowa, Texas. Significantly, the town of Panna Maria (Virgin Mary), near San Antonio, Texas, dedicated to the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, was the first Polish settlement in the United States (1854). A grotto dedicated to Our

Lady of Częstochowa was built in San Antonio in 1966 to commemorate the Polish millennium of Christianity (966-1966). (p. 3)

Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2007) describes ancient and modern incarnations of the Black Madonna, pointing out that her popularity can be attributed to her “uniting and equalizing function on a social and national level” that renders gender, race, class, and ethnic origin as foundations of strength and not obstacles (p. 11). She points out the transformation of the Black Madonna in the Christian tradition, namely that the “Christian Mary inherited the tradition of her powerful female predecessors, although she was gradually stripped of some of her powers, such as her dominion over life and death, her wisdom, and her sexuality.” (p. 16). This observation is congruent with the patriarchal nature of Christianity in general, which is beyond the scope of this study and a topic for another time.

In her survey regarding the origins of the traditions linked to the iconicity of the Black Madonna, Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2007) comments that many Christian symbols and narratives can be traced back to pagan roots, presenting Christianity as “a good example of the syncretic processes, as it has absorbed a gamut of preexistent beliefs and practices, incorporating them into its symbols and rituals. The Virgin Mary, Mother of God, is a clear example of syncretism” (pp. 16-18). She applies the syncretic processes to the Polish Black Madonna of Częstochowa who presents a certain kind of syncretism: “She is a Byzantine painting of a Black Madonna holding a child, of the type called *Hodegetria*, or ‘Indicator of the Way,’ dating from the sixth—ninth century” (p. 18). The worship of the Black Madonna began in 1384, when the painting was brought to the Pauline monastery at Jasna Góra, located in Częstochowa, Poland. The icon has been perceived as miraculous, one of the most famous “miracles” includes

saving Poland from the Swedish invasion in 1655, referred to as *Potop*, or the Swedish Deluge. The idea of miracles performed by Marian figures, such as apparitions and sightings of the Mary weeping and producing actual tears, is deeply rooted in a magic consciousness. People who claim to experience these things seem to genuinely believe that they did see a miracle and that they did see the Mother of God crying real tears. Such interpretations would not be possible from a modern perspective who has a much more dissociated worldview.

The Black Madonna has also been experienced through a mythic consciousness. Some of the myths surrounding the landscape in Częstochowa county show yet another example of binary oppositions that contribute to the construction of national symbols in Poland. For instance,

[a]ccording to a widespread legend, 'Łysiec,' or 'Bold Mountain,' is the place of witches' Sabbaths. This presumed darkness is countered by the nearby Jasna Góra, or 'Bright' (meaning holy) Mountain, where the sanctuary of the most venerated Polish icon, ironically the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, is located. (Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, 2007, p. 32)

The juxtaposition of dark and bright, profane and sacred, evil and good provides an important contrast in Christian symbolism, which in this case is adapted to Polish messianic national identity. The name of the location, Jasna Góra signifies a symbolic pedestal for the Black Madonna, also referred to as Jasna Panna (Radiant Virgin). The emphasis on this brightness and radiance in those names is mirrored in visual manifestations of the Catholic Church. The pope's robes are all white, for instance. The color white has a connotation of purity, innocence, and good, which in the case of the symbolic expressions of the Catholic Church, be it names or clothes, can be interpreted as proximity to god and heaven. In the case of the Jasna Panna, the name

implies both, purity and closeness to the divine. The color black in the case of the Black Madonna has invited various explanations; mostly that it was a result of age, which seems to be the case for some of the black madonnas, but not all of them. Moss and Capannari (1953) offered their hypothesis: “The black madonnas are Christian borrowings from earlier pagan art forms which depicted Ceres, Demeter, or Isis as black in the color characteristic of these goddesses of the earth”, they continue, “[a]long this line, in 1335 a prior at the Chalis Monastery...noted that Mary represents the earth, which is the body and darkness. Hence, Mary being of the earth, can rightfully act as celestial attorney for all earthly sinners” (p. 324). Christian signifieds have usually been superimposed on pagan art forms, the roots of many of today’s Christian symbols.

The image of the Madonna is also linked to that of a fertile and nourishing Mother Earth, the source who gives and takes life. As Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2007) notes

[t]he cult of Mother Earth as the origin of all creation goes back to matriarchal times and manifests itself in such goddesses as Prythiwi, Isis, Ishtar, Cybele, Ceres, Aphrodite, Venus, and Freya. In fact, Adam, the first man, according to Judeo-Christian tradition, was formed out of clay, and his name is derived from *adamah*—earth (Heb.). (p. 34)

Furthermore, “[i]n Polish popular religiosity and apocryphal writings, where the *sacrum* and the *profanum* are parts of the same reality, the Mother of God is a protectress and a creator or a cocreator of the world” (Oleszkiewicz-Peralba , 2007, p. 37). In the Polish narrative, Mary has played several symbolic mother roles, including that of

one’s own mother, family, motherland, and the state” being called “Matka Polka and Matka Polska, indicating that she is Mother Pole and Mother Poland. In her name, and under her protection, numerous private and public battles for independence from foreign and internal oppression took place” (p. 39).

The author of this study has vivid recollections of the term “Matka Polka” being used when referring to women in her family who are mothers, mostly when everyday challenges were tangible. According to a personal interview Oleszkiewicz-Peralba conducted with Danuta Olbryś,

[t]he term *Matka Polka* symbolizes the qualities of fortitude, bravery, devotion, sacrifice, and heroism of Polish women who had to take care of family and society while their husbands were fighting for the freedom of Poland on the battlefield, or when they were deported to Siberia from the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland through the First and Second World Wars. (p. 173, Note 51)

In the author’s experience, those qualities were also implied when the term *Matka Polka* was used at her home, applying less to the absence of husbands, but more to the context of living in a communist society at the time which required its own set of sacrifices from women.

The cult of Mary does have little basis in the New Testament and it only emerges in the fifth century of the Christian Church. What distinguishes the Roman Catholic Church most from other Christian churches is its emphasis upon Mary (Carroll, 1986). Returning to the image of the Mother of God, specifically Our Lady of Częstochowa (fig. 5), whose wound in the form of three saber lines on her left cheek “may be seen as symbolic of the abused feminine, parallels the injuries inflicted on the Polish people and motherland” (Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, 2007, p. 39). The painting has been desecrated by infidel plunderers in 1430, which is a possible explanation for the wounds, which “are also a symbolic reflection of the wounds of Christ” (p. 40). The signification of the Marian figure as a symbol of courage has been displayed in contemporary contexts, such as the Solidarity movement where the image of the Black Madonna “was worn on lapels, standards, and guidons and used as a stamp for

Solidarity correspondence” and “political prisoners elaborated her image on towels, in the same way that Chicano/a and Mexican prisoners in the United States and Mexico paint the Virgin of Guadalupe in their *arte de pano*” (p. 43).

The Black Madonna embodies many roles in the realm of magic consciousness: Queen of Poland, Mother of God, Mother of the Polish nation. To this day, Mary is among the most venerated religious figures and symbols of Polish devotion, and Our Lady of Częstochowa the most prominent physical manifestation, attracting large groups of pilgrims to Jasna Góra every year (Maniura, 2004). And although it is not “a collective representation of Polish society, it is the most sacred symbol in the Polish ethos, the ubiquitous reminder of the Marian tenor of Polish Catholicism” (Kubik, 1994, p. 108). An example of mythic consciousness can be observed during the Pope John Paul II’s speech while he was visiting Poland for the first time as pontiff. He punctuated his visit of Jasna Góra with the following words:

Jasna Góra is not only a place of pilgrimage for Poles from Poland and the rest of the world. Jasna Góra is the sanctuary of the nation... Polish history, particularly of the last centuries, can be written in many different ways, there are many keys to its interpretation. *Yet if we want to know how this history flows through Polish hearts, it is necessary to come here. It is necessary to put one’s ear to this Place. It is necessary to hear an echo of the Nation’s life in the Heart of Its Queen and Mother.* (as cited quoted in Kubik, 1994, p. 108, [emphasis added])

He is describing the heart as well as hearing, referring to the sound of the heartbeat of Poland, which is how myth is expressed.



Figure 5. Our Lady of Częstochowa, Jasna Góra, Poland. Icon dating from sixth to ninth century A.D.

Apart from the color black, the aesthetic of the Madonna has acquired another layer of symbolic meaning through the process of restoration. The assumption is, that after the restoration “commissioned by Władysław Jagiełło and executed by Italian masters, the image acquired a new quality” since its “original , schematic flatness, Characteristic of Eastern icons, was enriched by the roundness and softness of an Italian school” (Kubik, 1994, p. 109). This fusion of artistic styles, where the uniqueness of the painting meets the “soft magic” has been offered as possible explanation for to the icon’s popularity (Kubik, 1994, p. 109). Additionally, Kubik suggests that the symbolic level of the double aesthetic quality can potentially be interpreted as through Poland’s existence between the East and the West.

Poles have, throughout the centuries, thought of their country as a place where the Western and Eastern civilizations and cultural currents merged. Perhaps this explains—at least partially—the enormous popularity of a painting that somehow epitomizes this stereotype of the dual nature of Polish culture. (p. 109)

The Black Madonna as a national symbol represents several qualities that are ingrained into the mythic idea of the Polish nation. The universal idea of a nurturing and protecting mother figure represents a strong value in Poland. Mothers are perceived with a lot of respect and are often times called sacred, which is something this author has witnessed and embraced while interacting with her own mother. She has also witnessed a very different way of interacting between mothers and their children while growing up in Germany. In conversations with her younger sister, who grew up in Germany since the age of three, the author noticed different ways parents, and especially mothers, were treated (i.e., sometimes being called by their first name; perceived more as equals/friends by their children). The main difference that stood out

is precisely the image of the sacred mother, which does not mean that one can only convey respect when perceiving a mother as sacred, but this particular notion explains why the Marian devotion seems to have a stronger hold in cultures that live in closely knit families, such as Italy, Spain, and Poland.

Culture and religion are inextricably tied to each other and in order to understand the symbols that emerge out of that relationship one needs to be part of the linguistic community. The principle of ingroup and outgroup plays an important role here. To an outsider who visits the shrine in Częstochowa, the icon does not convey the same emotional identification as it does to a Catholic from Poland. The outsider may or may not appreciate the icon as a piece of art and be curious about its history, but that is a dissociated stance. To the insider, embarking on a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra and being allowed to view the Black Madonna during specific windows of time, before the shrine is closed again for the day, that is an entirely different experience. Why do Muslims travel to the Holy City of Mecca? For the same reasons Catholics go to Częstochowa, for the magical experience. It would not make sense for a Catholic to go to Mecca, just as a Muslim would not join the pilgrimage to Jasna Góra (the Paulinian monastery being the symbolic center of Catholic Poland) or to Vatican City. If I do not share a particular code, a symbol system, I become a mere dissociated spectator who does not understand the signs and symbols of that code and thus remains an outsider. The insider is not only looking at a painting, the insider is part of the Black Madonna and participates in the immediacy of the magic. Whereas the outsider just looks on.

Although the goal for most religiously devoted Poles is to participate in a pilgrimage and to witness the original icon of the Black Madonna, there are also

processions for the Black Madonna with copies of the icon (Figure 7), visiting different locations throughout the country. In this particular photograph, the women carrying one such copy are wearing traditional Polish costumes; the copy of the icon is in a frame adorned with leaves, sitting on the women's shoulders; following the women are children and priests. The women in traditional costumes evoke the image of traditional values of the motherland, the *Matka Polka*, the queen mother sitting on their shoulders and protectively overlooking her land, her Poland. Such processions function as a reminder of the association between Polishness and Catholicism, reinforcing the role of the Catholic Church. It is also important to note here that these processions and parades usually target smaller towns, where the population is much more devoted to the church. It was in the church's interest to intensify the symbiosis between Catholicism and Polishness, and between church and civil society. That symbiosis is quite clearly part of the Catholic Church's political agenda until this day, which is received with mixed reactions, especially by the more secularly and liberally minded part of the population as evidenced by the cross controversy in 2010 discussed earlier.

Another manifestation of the powerful symbolism of the Black Madonna has been exemplified through an experience during the celebrations of the millennium (1966-1966), when Polish citizens repeatedly clashed with the state police

On the day when the icon was to come to Olsztyn, workers were kept at the factories until seven in the evening and students of the agricultural school were explicitly forbidden to take part in the festivities. In any case, the icon never arrived in Olsztyn: the police stopped it on the road and directed it to Frombork. After celebrations in that town, the icon was to travel to Warsaw, but a few kilometers outside Frombork, motorized police stopped the motorcade in which the Primate and the icon were riding, seized the painting, and took it away, to what destination no one could guess. (Micewski, 1984, p. 269, as cited in Kubik, 1994, p. 116)

Later on, it was found that the police secretly took the icon to the Warsaw Cathedral in order to sabotage the welcome ceremonies that were supposed to be hosted by two parishes. The icon “was forcefully detained for three months in the Warsaw Cathedral, and then for six years...in a side chapel on Jasna Góra” (p. 116). However, that did not stop the pilgrimage and the

icon’s empty frame, sometimes adorned with flowers, sometimes with a burning candle or a Bible inside, continued its tour and visited four southern and two eastern dioceses. *The perils and power of religion in Communist Poland came to be symbolized by the vacant frame.* (p. 116, emphasis added)

This event magnifies the idea of an emotional identification and of the affective power of a national symbol even in its absence. It does not have to be perceived with eyes (sight being an element of the perspectival worldview) in order to carry meaning. Eco (2004) comments on the power of an absent symbol:

The ambiguity of symbols comes from distant roots and is justified not only by the etymology of “*ymballein*” but by the very practice its etymology denotes. For one could easily say of those two matching pieces of token that they will be seamlessly put together again the day someone places them in the presence of each other and makes them fit together, removing them from the free flow of semiosis and turning each of them once more into a thing in the world of things; and yet what is so fascinating about each of the two separated elements is the very absence of the other, *for it is only on absence and in absence that the most overpowering passions thrive.* (p. 141, emphasis added)

The event of the Polish nation without a state during the partitions, and the procession of the frame without the icon during the millennial celebration of the Polish state, indicate parallels that are characteristic of Poland’s identity and the Polish response to colonizing powers. During crises, the national symbols were crucial for the survival for the Polish nation.

In addition to the image of the mother and the power of the absent symbol, the Black Madonna has also been turned into a royal figure, beginning in 1653 when the

Pauline monks in Częstochowa fought back the Swedish invaders. In symbolic gesture of gratitude, King Jan Kazimierz “dedicated Poland to the Virgin Mary and consecrated the icon as ‘Queen of Poland.’ It is probably from the king’s vows of faithfulness to the Virgin that Poland’s traditional motto, *Polonia semper fidelis*, originates” (Zubrzycki, 2006, p. 41). In 1956, Cardinal Wyszyński re-dedicated the Polish nation to the Queen of Poland, while repeating the king’s vows from three hundred years ago. He used those same words when welcoming the pope in his first visit in Poland, who in turn used those words as well. The painting in the shrine has a cover that includes a crown (fig. 6). The royal symbolism, although to a lesser degree, has been applied to the pope as well who has been called Poland’s king. Furthermore, Poland’s coat of arms, the White Eagle, is depicted with a crown. That crown was removed during the communist regime and put back as soon as the regime was overthrown. These overlapping semiotic qualities of Jasna Góra, the Madonna, the pope, the White Eagle, and the royal attributes, have all contributed to Poland’s national identity.



Figure 6. Our Lady of Częstochowa, Jasna Góra, Poland. Icon with crown and cover inside sanctuary.
Photo: EAST NEWS



Figure 7. Procession for the Black Madonna of Częstochowa in the southern town of Poronin, Poland, 1991. Copies of sacred icons travel across the country visiting different locations. Photo: Małgorzata Oleszkiewicz Peralba

The Contested Landscape of the National Stadium

Warsaw's semiotic landscape presents an interesting case for the study of national symbols. The capital of Poland has undergone many transformations in the past, but what makes it an interesting case is that it has not stopped transforming. This continuous process of transforming and never really being can be observed in various areas of the city.

Uncomfortably positioned between “polluted” East and mythical “West”, escaping the “second world” without quite reaching the “first”, proud of its dynamism, but nostalgically dreaming to be at last “done”, Warsaw seems reluctant to fully re-invent its identity around the strategic uniqueness of an idiosyncratic borderland city, and re-orient its self-perception accordingly. It is also unsure about fully allowing a creative, bottom-up use of the developmental chaos it is unable to conquer with traditional means, and too risk-averse to add purely cultural components to the business plans of its most prominent projects geared toward the post-industrial revitalization of its historical places. (Bartmański, 2012, p. 151)

One example of the transformative process is the story of the two stadiums. The National Stadium (Stadion Narodowy) was built where once the 10th-Anniversary Stadium (Stadion Dziesięciolecia) used to be, on the right bank of the Vistula (Wisła) river in the Praga district, opposite the city center. The former stadium has been demolished in 2008 to make space for the new one, the site for the events of UEFA European Football Championship, commonly referred to as Euro 2012 (Cope, 2010). The former stadium has had a rich history, its foundation consisted of the debris from World War II when 80% of the buildings in the city were destroyed. The new stadium has been built on that very same foundation, preserving its historical significance. The name, 10th-Anniversary Stadium, referred to Poland's tenth anniversary as a political state, the communist People's Republic of Poland; thus the opening of the stadium in

1955. Several events took place in the 10th-Anniversary Stadium that had historical national and international significance (Figure 8).

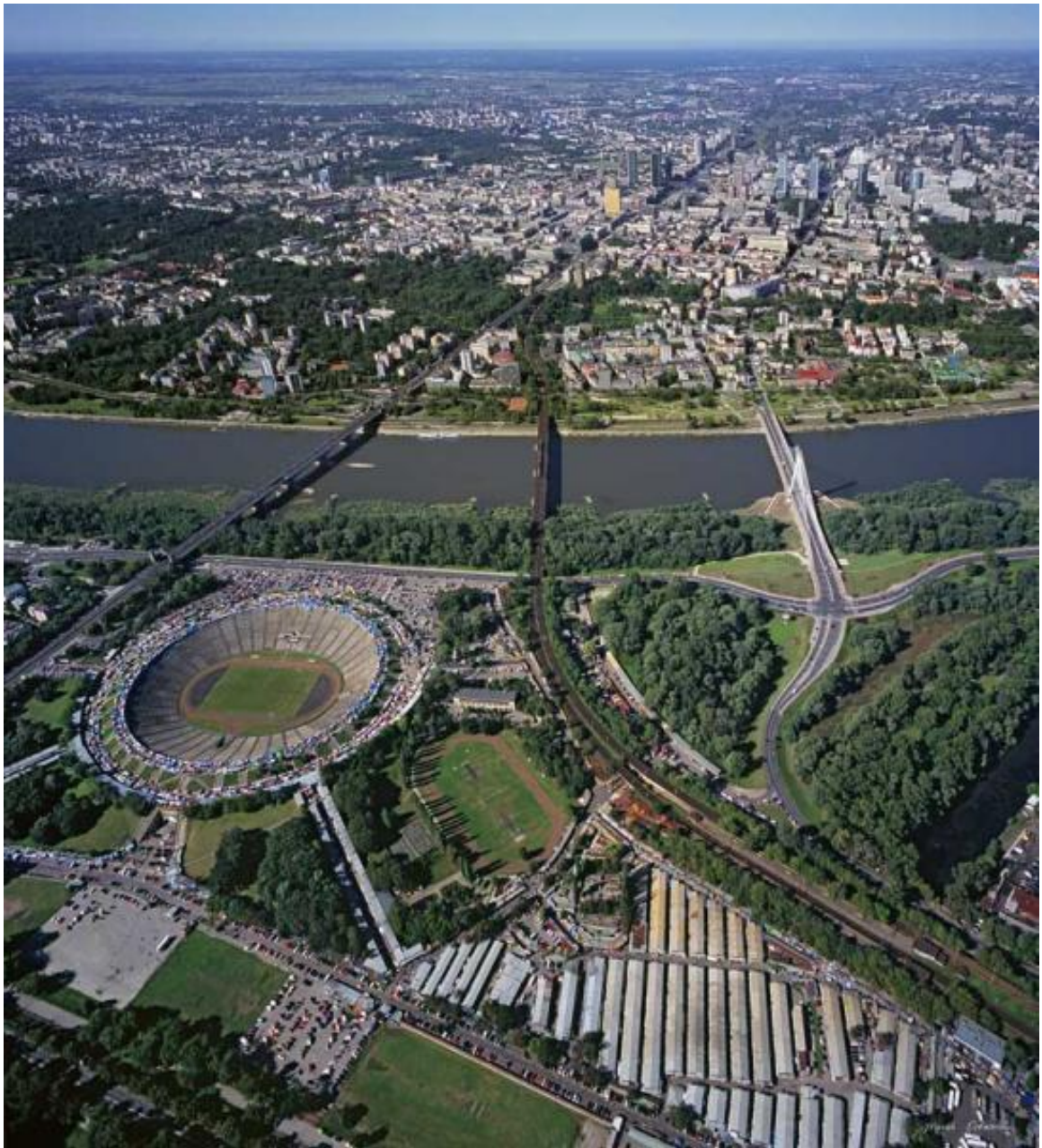


Figure 8. Aerial view of the 10th Anniversary Stadium in the panorama of Warsaw: Photo: Marek Ostrowski/semper.pl

Sulima (2012) mentions several of those events that took place at the 10th Anniversary Stadium in his ethnographic report, discussing some of the semantic transformations that took place in the public space in Warsaw and focusing on the specific transformation of the stadium over time.

In the public opinion the Stadium is associated with a series of events eagerly reconstructed by the media: 1955—the Second International Youth Festival; 1956—the legendary victory of Stanisław Królak (over the Soviet cyclists) in the Peace Race; 1958—the athletics match between Poland and the USA; 1968—the self-immolation of Ryszard Siwiec as an act of protest against the military intervention of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia; 1983—the Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II during his second pilgrimage to Poland; 1987—the last football match played at this stadium, a match between Poland and Finland. (Sulima, 2012, p. 246)

Once the stadium started to deteriorate and the city eventually stopped hosting events and games, it was abandoned and stood empty for a few years. In 1989, in exchange for the maintenance of the facility, the city of Warsaw leased the stadium to a company named Damis for commercial purposes and Jarmark Europa (Europe Bazaar) was born (Figure 9). The bazaar was set up in the crown of the stadium and was composed of more than 5,000 businesses, thus becoming one of the largest markets in Europe. The site of the stadium has offered a multi-faceted picture over the years of its existence, being described as a “mix of Socialist mausoleum, Aztec temple, and bunker system with a network of small gardens, along with a grid structure of endless market stalls” (Miller, 2009, laura-palmer.pl). The bazaar began with Vietnamese and Russian traders; the Vietnamese are the largest minority in Warsaw and the bazaar had mostly been operated by students and other educated Vietnamese citizens. Over time, representatives of other nationalities and ethnicities traveled to Warsaw and opened their market stalls.

Although the bazaar might have appeared chaotic, there was a clear organization of space between the different national groups. The northern sector of the stadium was governed by the Vietnamese and the Lithuanians; the eastern sector was occupied by Chechens and Georgians; the southern sector was occupied by Russians and Ukrainians; and the crown of the stadium was dominated by Armenians (Kudzia & Pawelczyk, 2001). Operating hours of this grey-market were between 3:00am and 12:00pm and one could acquire everything, from pirated CDs, fake designer clothing, and shoelaces, to drugs and guns. Sulima (2012) asserted,

the presence of a bazaar on the premises of the 10th-Anniversar Stadium should not be seen as something incidental or relict, but rather a forecast of something new and not yet recognized, something that disturbs our set patterns of thought on the city, 'the Other' and the ways of cultural auto-identification. (p. 241)

Jarmark Europa stood out as a multicultural site in an otherwise ethnically homogenous Warsaw and at the end of its existence it inspired a series of art projects that culminated in "The Finissage of Stadium X" organized by the Laura Palmer Foundation, an independent arts organization based in Warsaw. The art projects focused on several events that took place at the stadium that became the stage for some of Poland's history. One of the epochal moments happened when the stadium was still alive as a stadium, on September 8th, 1968. As Władysław Gomułka, a communist party leader, was speaking on stage before 100,000 people, a father of five, Ryszard Siwiec doused himself in petrol and lit a match. His self-immolation was a protest of the use of Polish troops in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia a month prior to the event, and although seven seconds of his action had been recorded by a Polish news crew, the video had been suppressed and kept an official secret until 1980. The video can be currently found in two versions on YouTube, one of the two versions includes Catholic funeral music and

showing an image of Siwiec as a holy ghost at the end of the video, depicted as another national victim, joining the myth of martyrdom.



Figure 9. Jarmark Europa (“Stadium-Bazaar”). Photo: Wojciech Traczyk

Another epochal moment was in 1983, fifteen years after Siwiec’s self-immolation and six years before the bazaar came into being, when Pope John Paul II visited Poland for the second time since becoming pope and delivered a mass at the stadium. This time there were no instructions for the camera operators who were filming the event to only point their lenses on nuns and the elderly. The stadium was filled with people of all ages, eager to see the pope and hear his message. The pope used the stadium clock as an altar and planted a crucifix on the crown of the stadium, which remained there following his departure.

The heaviness of the symbolic act from 1968 stands in contrast to the rather joyous event in 1983. Both carry a mix of magic and mythic signification based in Poland's past and its national identity. The drastic display of sacrificial symbolism in the act of self-immolation and the pope's mass held on the pile of bones of the insurgents, praying underneath a cross, are examples of the culture of resistance mentioned at the beginning of this study. This resistance can be explained through the strong hold of the magic and mythic consciousness structures. Although Polish society as a whole does not exemplify a community that is rooted in magic consciousness, its fate throughout history is interspersed with events that demonstrate the reach of magic consciousness, eventually progressing into a mythic consciousness.

Not only are the two stadiums the more obvious symbols of the Polish nation, but the cross, once again, enters the stage *the* national symbol. It once again made its way back onto the stage, signifying Poland as the crucified nation, as the Christ of nations; thus continuing the myth. In 1983 the Solidarity movement was gaining momentum, which was tangible as well during that mass and the dialed down media censorship, allowing for a more open broadcast. It was also tangible due the fact that during the mass the pope was talking about the 1683 Battle of Vienna, commemorating a victory of the Holy League, consisting of the Holy Roman Empire in league with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, against the Ottoman Empire. Commemorating an event that overthrew another empire and evoking national identity, while being suppressed by the Soviet empire, contributed once more to the legitimization of Poland as a nation and strengthened the myth of resurrection.

The contestation of the semiotic landscape during the time period when Jarmark Europa was nearing its end presented an interesting juxtaposition between the bazaar, and the at the time recently revitalized Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, as well as between “provincial Praga on the right bank of the Vistula river and historical center of Warsaw on the left bank” (Sulima, 2012, p. 244). The function of these dichotomies is mythological, following the Barthes tradition, and the most important dichotomy between East and West (Asia and Europe) was running through the middle of the 10th-Anniversary Stadium, as Sulima acutely observed.

Once the construction of the new National Stadium has been completed (fig. 10), the discourse in the media reflected on its historical importance, evoking images of resurrection that signified resurrection from the ruins of the past and determined to look to the future. That image presented the stadium as more than a construction, it has been called a symbol. It has been described as a symbol of resurrection that emerged from the ruins, showing the world its new face and wanting to prove that it has overcome the shadows of the past: the crimes of the Nazis, the communist suppression, and the wild capitalism during the time of transformation (Follath & Puhl, 2012). The National Stadium is also bridging the gap that existed between the center of the capitol, such as the Old Town and the Palace of Culture and Science, and Praga on the outskirts of Warsaw. Hence, the mythological dichotomies between East and West are undergoing a transformation

The stadiums, old and new, have been national symbols of two versions of the same nation. One could argue that the new stadium signified a symbolic extension of the old, indicating that architectural changes in a semiotic landscape do not necessarily

erase memory. The design of the National Stadium includes Poland's national colors, white and red, wrapping around the stadium; the chairs inside the stadium are silver and red, signifying a modernized version of those colors. And outside of the stadium? There is a small strip filled with market stalls. A renaissance of the bazaar.



Figure 10. National Stadium (Stadion Narodowy) in Warsaw.

In a recent interview with *Gazeta Wyborcza*, professor and cultural anthropologist Wojciech Burszta, elaborated why bazaars and markets continue to be popular in Poland (Aksamit, March 2014). He mentions the general appeal of markets as creating an environment that encourages and inspires social interaction, calling it the

pro-social function of such places. One of his observations addresses the more immediate nature of markets where customers pay with cash instead of using a credit card in a supermarket, thus using “real” money. The immediacy and “realness” of this experience showcases the process of dissociation, as defined in the theory of dissociation and dimensional accrual (Kramer, 2012). The bazaar experience is connected to a need for association; Burszta (Aksamit, March 2014) explains in his interview that as a society, we all originally come from a village and even if we move to cities, a bazaar is culturally close to us, we have it in our blood. He also speaks of the transformation of the bazaar from being perceived as somewhat embarrassing in the early 1990s, to becoming fashionable and a tourist attraction.

The mythologization of the semiotic space of bazaars highlights the underlying need for human communication. In the case of Poland, bazaars have become desirable outside of Warsaw as well, with regional efforts to revive that semiotic public sphere, where bazaars and markets constitute “cultural anchors” (Burszta, quoted in Aksamit, March 2014). According to Burszta, bazaars are here to stay; he boldly states that, given the rate at which the number of bazaars and market squares is growing, Poles need bazaars almost as much as they need air. So even though Jarmark Europa (Europe Bazaar) had to make space for the new stadium, the idea of the bazaar never really disappeared. This answers the question what makes the stadium, in its various reincarnations, a national symbol.

Conclusion

The historian Norman Davies wrote *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's present* and published it in 1984, later adding an additional chapter to the 2001 edition

since so much has happened in the years between the first publication and the new edition. One of the passages from the original text paints a more general, and still current, picture of what makes Poland the nation that it is, addressing some questions that are at the very heart (yes, that was intended) of the present study. This study proposed some answers to those questions, some more satisfying than others, prompting more questions. Here is a poignant quote.

The fate of Poland, in fact, prompts reflections on the deepest aspects of history and human mortality....about the essential attributes of human society, indeed of human nature. If Poland were indeed destroyed, how then could it later be revived? If Poland did resurrect, then surely something must have survived its physical destruction. In short, when the Body Politick dies, what is it exactly, if anything, that remains? To these questions, as old as Plato, the Marxists have no clear answer. The Catholics will argue by analogy from the fate of an individual sinner, and will talk of the nation's 'soul'. The Romantics talk of Poland's 'Spirit'....When active, in the lengthy span of its lifetime, old Poland played a prominent part in the pageant of Europe's historic nations. When destroyed, as the Dead Man of Europe, it still had a part to play. Evidently, there is life after Partitions. (Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe*, first published 1984, new edition 2001, p. 277

Throughout this study, the author attempted to show what national symbols are and the role they play in social change. The theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation has been applied in tandem with semiotics to offer a hermeneutics of national symbols.

Although the ramifications of this study as well as the method of semiotics are limited, they offer a fresh perspective how to recognize what national symbols are and to understand how they can affect social change. The study confirms the validity of the tenets of the consciousness structures and their usefulness when investigating the meaning of symbols in communities, furthering the understanding of intercultural and international communication.

As scholars of communication and mindful citizens of this planet, we need to be aware of perceptual differences when we study intercultural and international contexts. Meaning does not exist in a vacuum and we need to be taught the semiotic system if we want to understand the meaning of the symbols that belong to it. It is unwise to impose one's own agency onto conventional systems and expecting those systems to change. In order to affect social change we must know the conventionality of the respective sign system and employ symbols that have meaning to that particular community we are trying to affect. We cannot think without the sign system of a language, we do not have an identity without language, and we do not know meaning without language. By knowing such a sign system and being part of the linguistic community, we have access to symbols that have the power to evoke a response from the community and potentially mobilize its members to challenge the status quo.

National symbols, when conflated with nationalist discourse, have the capacity to provoke controversies between competing ideologies and memories. The theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation has the potential to demonstrate how national symbols can move back and forth on the spectrum of the consciousness structures, eliciting different interpretations contingent on specific symbol systems.

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